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"THE GIRL AND A MILLION" AND "THE BOY WITH MUSCLE," IN THIS ISSUE.

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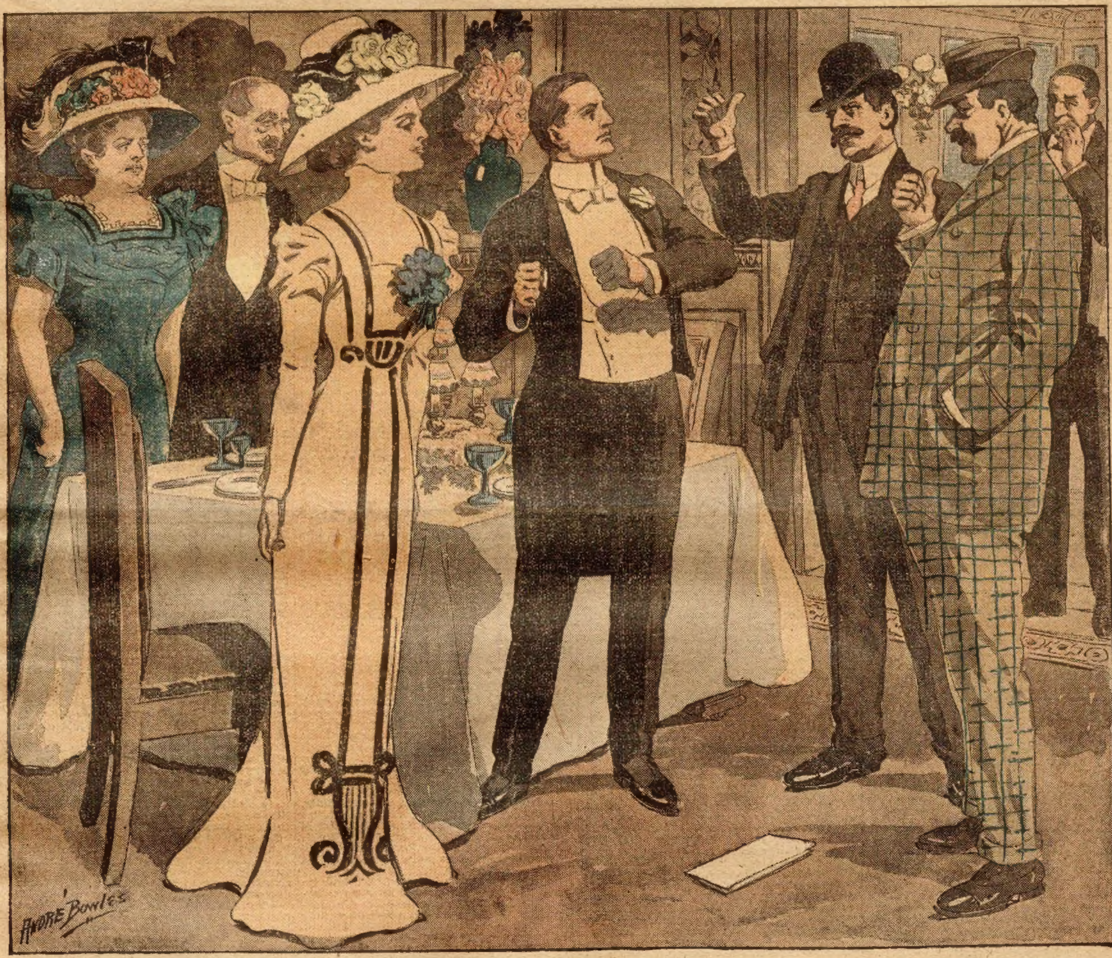

The Girl and a Million;

Or, THE CROOKED LEGISLATOR

By Alfred B. Tozer

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CHAPTER I.

A DECLARATION OF WAR.

DUKE GAYLORD, owner and editor of the Evening Herald, at Harlan, was in no mood for callers. He had planned a quiet evening with his books and papers in his editorial rooms in the newspaper building, and was not a little annoyed when an impatient knocking came on the locked outer door.

After waiting a minute in the hope that the intruders would go away, he left his desk and opened the door, grudgingly. The men who stood in the hallway were Daniel Malone, president and general manager of the Harlan Iron Works, to which institution the town owed much of its prosperity, and Nathan May, who represented the city in the State Senate.

"If you are not too busy," said Malone, with a slur on the last word, "we would like to discuss a matter of business with you."

In Harlan all doors flew open, almost the walls fell down, at the approach of Big Dan Malone, as he was familiarly called, and he was now annoyed at the long wait in the hallway. Malone employed a thousand men. He paid them fair wages, was friendly with them all in a rough, condescending way, and told them how to vote when election time came. He was not accustomed to cooling his heels before any man's door, and he now showed his indignation in his speech.

Duke threw open the door, when he saw who stood there, drew easy chairs before an open grate fire, and set a box of cigars within reach. His visitors glanced about the rooms with disapproval in their eyes. They were handsome rooms, showing good taste and lavish expenditure of money. Duke was young, ambitious, good looking in an athletic, blonde way, and not inclined to scrimp himself in the matter of dainty things. Malone and May had always looked on an editor as one who would grab greedily at any crust thrown him, as one who lived in a garret and performed his editorial tasks on top of a dry goods box, so the luxury of the rooms did not decrease their annoyance.

The visitors were both bulky, red-faced, strong of jaw, and insolent in bearing. Duke had never been on intimate terms with them, and he suspected now that some sly trick was on. He would much rather they had remained away. Long years of absolute control of a thousand "hands" at the mills had made Malone a bully, feared by his enemies and cajoled by those who had favors to seek at his hands. Senator May was the same sort of a man, only more tactful. Where Malone won his way by brute force, May gained his points by cunning. In the presence of Malone he was attentive, subservient; abroad in the city he was dictatorial and exacting. It was May who opened the conversation, after all were seated and cigars were well alight.

"Mr. Malone has called," he said, "for the purpose of discussing the charter of the proposed Harlan & Coal Mountain Railroad."

"The Legislature will soon be in session now," interrupted Malone, "and we think that agitation of the charter proposition should begin immediately in the columns of the Evening Herald."

"What do you want me to do?" asked Duke, annoyed at the impudence with which the ironmaster spoke of assuming control of the editorial columns of his newspaper.

"First," replied Malone, "I want a perfect understanding with you. Next, I want you to advocate the charter proposition from start to finish. I want the Herald to champion the thing from the word go, to point out the necessity for a liberal charter, and all that. It will make the fight easier when the bill is introduced in the Senate by Senator May. We can't afford active opposition there, understand?"

Duke nodded pleasantly, but the lines of his face were hardening. The young man was independent, personally and editorially, and the thought that this man was ordering, not asking, for the support of the Herald angered him.

"We shall be obliged to ask for an ironclad charter," continued Malone, not seeing the danger signals in the young editor's face. "See here," he added, spreading an enlarged map of the county on the table and smoothing it down with a heavy hand, "our coal and iron lands lie off here to the south, twenty miles from Harlan. Now, we want to tap them with a railroad, and we want protection from competition.

"There are deposits of coal and iron there which we have been unable to secure, and we do not propose to market the stuff for the owners, thus placing it in competition with our own products. In other words, we shall ask for a charter which will relieve us from the burden entailed on common carriers, yet still giving us the right to condemn property for our use. That is about all, I think."

"It seems to me," said Duke, when the other paused, "that a company exercising the right of eminent domain ought, in all fairness, to become a common carrier."

"For the very good reason I have already given you," replied Malone, evidently nettled at this criticism of his proposition, "we can't stand for any such thing. It wouldn't be business to market competitive products. We must have a charter which will permit us to decline freights at will."

"It strikes me," said Duke, "that the people whose lands are taken for your line will have something to say about that. The proposed charter will meet with strong opposition, if I am not mistaken."

"There will be no opposition in the districts through which the line will pass," smiled Senator May. "That feature of the case was looked after during the last election of Representatives to the Legislature."

"There were some queer changes in party majorities out there," said Malone. "And now that the point is settled, we have another proposition. Our investment must be protected by the State. We want a bounty for every ton of coal and iron carried over our line, a bounty from the State. That is about all, I think, except that we want a provision in the charter to the effect that if any of the rights conferred by the franchise are in any way changed or abridged during the life of the instrument—ninety-nine years—then the State shall become liable for any losses sustained by such change. It is all open and above-board, you see. I am perfectly frank with you because I want you to be able to meet any opposition which may arise. I don't ask any man to work in the dark."

The demands were so preposterous that the young editor almost laughed in the face of the ironmaster. The proposition seemed to him about like going abroad with a jimmy and a dark lantern. The pair stood revealed to him as a couple of political buccaneers. This is what they demanded:

The right to forcibly acquire private property for an enterprise in no sense a public one. That was bad enough, but what followed was worse.

They sought the protection of the State in placing the owners of that other coal and iron land in a position where they must sell their products at about the cost of production. This was worse than rebates.

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They wanted the State to pay them a bonus for carrying their own coal and iron over their own road, and they also wanted the State to give bond to make sure that none of the robber rights were ever taken from them. Duke sat back in his chair and looked the ironmaster over in amazement. There surely was no doubt that Malone and May were perfectly competent to look out for their own interests.

Malone's face flushed red under the scrutiny, but he kept his temper, much to the surprise of the Senator. He realized that he was doing business with a man who had his own notions of things, and who must be coaxed rather than threatened. Duke did not speak, and the silence was oppressive.

"And now," Malone went on, in his smoothest tones, "in view of the—the—well—rather unusual character of the charter desired, we want you to begin booming the franchise right now. You needn't tell all that we want, of course, not right off the handle, but you can advertise the necessity for the road."

Duke remained silent, and Malone drew a long breath, as if about to take another plunge into verbal depths.

"You writer chaps know well enough what to say," he continued. "All about the necessity for opening up the country, the many benefits to be derived, the State standing loyally by the men willing to risk their money, and all that. You know what to say, all right. And you must put it good and strong. You can't put it too strong."

"Of course," suggested May, whose face seemed to say that Malone had gone too far in his brutal frankness, "of course you will be let in on the ground floor for a reasonable amount of stock at par. The road will be immensely profitable. Why, the bonus from the State alone will pay all operating expenses."

The proposition was one which Duke could not accept, and yet he scarcely knew how to deal with the ironmaster. Malone was a power in the town, and in that part of the State, and his friendship was worth much to the young editor. His enmity might ruin his business. Duke was possessed of a fortune, which was not in the Evening Herald, but he did not care to risk losing what he had invested.

"I shall have to think this thing over," he said, presently sensing that there was only one thing he could say if pressed for a decision then. "I'm not quite sure about the passage of such a law as you suggest, and I can't afford to make the Evening Herald ridiculous. We'll talk it over at some future time. The Legislature is not yet in session, and there is time enough."

"The point ought to be settled right here and now," urged May, "for there is work to be done. We want the entire district back of the bill. We don't want to give the sneaking reformers a look in. Besides, you will strengthen your position by assisting the road through. It will make coal cheaper here. It will enable the iron company to pay better wages. It will bring thousands of dollars into the hands of our merchants. Surely, you can't overlook all these interests."

Before Duke could frame a reply, another knock came on the door, and then, without waiting for a formal invitation to enter, Norman Hill, the leading banker of the city, stepped into the room. There was a smile on his face as he entered, but that faded and he drew back a step as his eyes fell upon the disturbed faces of the two visitors. Malone, however, eagerly stepped forward with extended hand.

"I'm glad you've come, Hill," he said. "We're discussing the proposed charter of the Harlan & Coal Mountain Railroad, and seem to have come upon a snag. State the case, if you please, Senator."

Senator May took courage from the interested face of the banker. His statement of the matter, already gone over, was even more enthusiastic for the road as a benevolent institution, calculated to bring Harlan up to the New York standard, than even the words used to persuade Duke had been.

"Now," said Malone, at the close of the recital, "do you see anything wrong in the proposition? Our young editor, here, is doubtful, it seems. At least he wishes to defer his decision. Tell him what you think of the business, Hill."

"It will be a good thing for Harlan," said the banker, tentatively, "but I really am too full of something else to give the matter careful attention now. Just a moment with you, Duke, and I'm off."

Malone and May both scowled at Hill as he led Duke to the rear room and held low converse with him for a moment. When the banker passed out they gave surly reply to his pleasant "good evening."

"Look here!" said Malone, then losing control of temper in his rage at being thus kept waiting, "if this is a question of money, out with it! How much do you want?

"If you insist on a decision to-night," said Duke, slowly, "I shall have to decline having anything to do with the matter, on any terms. I'm sorry, gentlemen, but that is the way I look at it now. I can't see how I can support a measure of the sort you propose. Such legislation is against public policy."

The ironmaster was fast passing beyond all restraint. As Duke spoke he paced up and down the room, eager for the physical action which strong men demand when in anger. In one of his turnings he came upon a dainty paper basket which stood in his path, and sent it flying to the opposite side of the room with a violent kick. His rugged face took on a deeper red. His small eyes blazed forth from between contracted lids like points of flame. He swung his pudgy fists threateningly in the air. After years of mastery at Harlan he found his will opposed and by a mere stripling, a writer for the press! Men of the Malone stripe have little use for mere editors.

"We may look for opposition from you, then?" said the ironmaster, finally pausing before Duke and trying to speak calmly. "I anticipated as much, and came here to-night fully prepared for your feeble enmity. Why you see fit to oppose my interests, and the best interests of Harlan, I can't comprehend, but I'll tell you this, young man," he added, swinging his clenched hands aloft, "I'll put you out of the running if you say one word against the franchise in your blackmailing sheet! I'll break you, financially and socially, and set you out on the road, a dirty tramp! Now, let me hear you say again that you'll oppose me!"

The ironmaster was so far beyond all self-control, so far from all reason, that the young editor refrained from any attempt at argument with him. Instead, he turned his back to the passionate man and fixed his eyes on the flames of the grate.

May took Malone by the arm and said a few words in his ear, but all to no purpose. The ironmaster, angrier than ever at Duke's cool way of ignoring his fury, cast him aside and stepped around to face the young man.

"Do you know who owns this town?" he demanded, swinging his fat arm about as if to include all creation. "The Iron Company does! Do you know who is the Iron Company? I am the Iron Company, I and friends. We pay out twenty thousand dollars of good money here every week. What could your town do without that? What could you do, what could your clever banker do, without the Iron Works?"

May made a motion as if to check the rapid words of the speaker, but he went on, fiercer than ever, giving such an exhibition of uncontrollable rage as he might have given before a herd of foreign workmen at the mills. Duke stepped aside, his hands clenched, his muscles drawn.

"What was it that Hill said to you out there?" Malone demanded. "If Hill puts his lip in against me I'll clean him out, bag and baggage! A word from me will take every savings account away from him. If I say that word, he'll die in the gutter. The Iron Company owns Hill. If I tell him not to speak to you on the street, he will pass you with his nose in the air! Oppose me, will you?"

"Gentlemen," warned May, "this is disgraceful. You will both regret this in calmer moments. Don't act like school children."

"This is no child's play," shouted Malone. "I'm merely telling him what will happen to him, and to his friend Hill, if he dares to set his judgment against mine in the matter of this charter. I could have his sheet cast into the river, office and all. I have but to speak the word to have him set out into the streets in a dress of feathers and tar. I'll show him whether my enterprises are against public policy! Who made him the judge in such matters?"

All this, and much more, Duke listened to without a word of protest, with May trying his best to bring about a cessation of the wordy attack.

"If it is money he wants," roared Malone, at last, turning to May, "you are authorized to deal with him. If it is blows he seeks, send him to me. I'll show him that he can't oppose me and do business here."

It seemed to the young editor now that Malone was going too far. At his calmest, the ironmaster was a boastful man. In his rage he swelled out still further in his own estimation. He was indeed a power in the town, but Duke was weary of the insults and bullying of the man. For years he had heard Malone discussed everywhere had had Malone for breakfast, dinner and supper. The air seemed thick with Malone. His patience was exhausted at last.

"There is little use in continuing this scene," he said. "I have nothing more to say. If you return at some other time in a calmer frame of mind, with less of the bully in your manner, with less of whisky in your breath, I'll talk with you."

And so, shouting back that he would insult Duke and his friends on the streets, that he would ruin Hill if he interfered, Malone, red and foaming, was led away by May.

CHAPTER II.

"A NIGHT IN BAGDAD."

On a snowy December afternoon, a week following the exasperating interview with Malone and May, Duke Gaylord took a train for Philadelphia, from which city Harlan lies not far distant. It had been a week of hard work and much worry, and the young editor was eager for a breathing spell.

The morning following the interview referred to, the Morning Star, the rival daily, had declared, editorially, for the charter about as Malone wanted it, and included in the article was a veiled attack on Duke, evidently written at the instigation of Malone and designed to draw the fire of the Herald.

At first, for several days, Duke had ignored the attack, treating it as of no consequence when it was mentioned in his presence, but, day by day, the personal attacks had become more insulting, and at last, on the day previous to his departure for Philadelphia, Duke had run an editorial denouncing the proposed charter as a scheme to loot the State treasury, and openly accusing Malone and May of attempting to bribe the Herald.

This had brought the fight into the open, much to the delight of that class of readers who dearly love a newspaper row, and Malone had interested himself in trying to frighten business men he thought he could control into boycotting the Herald advertising columns. His success had not been equal to his malice, and he had then called his employes together and denounced the newspaper as an enemy to the Iron Company. This had some effect on the subscription lists, but, as the mill men belonged to a class not usually interested in newspapers, the defection was by no means serious.

Right and left Duke's acquaintances congratulated him on his fight against Malone, whose arrogant manners had created for him many enemies, but there was another element in Harlan which was not so easy to handle. On more than one occasion Duke had been publicly insulted on the streets by swarthy employes of the Iron Company, who doubtless believed that by doing so they were pleasing their master.

This was the situation on the afternoon Duke found himself in Philadelphia. As yet he had not suffered personal violence at the hands of Malone's thugs, nor had he found it prudent to keep away from the districts inhabited by the employes of the Iron Company, but the situation, taken as a whole, was not a pleasant one. The worst feature of it all was that Duke felt like he was living at the top of a smoldering volcano which might at any moment burst into destroying eruption. Malone was desperate and unscrupulous, and there was no knowing what he would do next.

The young editor was learning the hard lesson which many other editors have learned in an equally expensive and disquieting school, that the "vested interests" are not particular as to methods employed or tools used when their profits are stake. He was not opposing the proposed railroad, it is true, but he was using his best endeavor to prevent political pirates getting their hands into the State treasury, which was surely enough to set the gang buzzing about his ears.

To prove that a steal was meditated, he quoted May's remark that the bounty from the State would pay all operating expenses. May denied making the statement, and the ironmaster backed him in the denial, so May was now as deeply in the fight as was his employer.

When Duke stepped from the coach at Philadelphia he resolved to push all disquieting thoughts from his mind. He was not there on business, and wanted to forget, for the time being, the Herald, Harlan, and Malone. Duke was in love! Not momentarily fascinated by a charming face and figure, but honestly, deeply in love with Miss Louise Hilton.

Miss Hilton was young, and pretty, and refined. It is doubtful if a writer ever succeeded by any cunning combination of words in giving to a reader an adequate impression of a young girl's face. Louise was brown of hair and eyes and "peachy" of complexion. She was slender and graceful and knew how to wear her clothes, which is a rare quality in woman. She seemed a child in many ways, yet there was proof that she had been carefuly educated and had seen much of the world. Duke liked her best in white, for then she seemed like "a grown-up little child" he had somewhere known.

Somehow, Duke couldn't get over the notion that he had known Louise somewhere previous to the day he had been introduced to her by Mrs. Albert Lawrence. Before he had known the girl a month he had informed her of this impression and she had laughed at him. He believed that she might have told him when and where they had met before if she had only been inclined to do so, but she never did.

Mrs. Lawrence had met Louise at the great department store of which her husband was principal owner and manager. The girl was cashier there, and Mrs. Lawrence had seemed, all at once, to form a violent attachment for her. She asked her husband where she had found the girl, and he, man like, had replied that he didn't remember.

"She just came along," he said, "and I liked her looks and gave her the job. Bright little thing, eh?"

"She fascinates me," said Mrs. Lawrence, "and I'm going to have her up to the house."

"I hope you won't be making a match for her," the husband observed, with a grin, "for I want her here. She doesn't know much about the job, but I like her."

The wife had taken the cashier to the Lawrence home, and on the day of Duke's visit to Philadelphia she was virtually a member of the family. And this in spite of the fact that the girl was apparently as non-committal concerning her people and her past life as she was about the previous acquaintance Duke was insisting upon.

"To be frank with you," Mrs. Lawrence had said to Duke, "I know little more about the girl than you do. Albert employed the girl because he liked her looks, and I brought her here because she amuses me. She was alone in the city and in need of friends, and that is why I first sought her out. For all I know, she may be the seventeenth daughter of the Sultan of Turkey, if there is such a being. Now run along and make her love you if you can. I can't tell you who she is, or where her home is, but I know that she is worthy of the finest man that ever lived."

Their talks about Louise always ended in this way, for Duke made no secret of his love for the girl.

"I'm sure she has good reasons for not wishing to talk about herself," Duke would say, in the girl's defense.

"Of course she has," Mrs. Lawrence would admit. "She certainly isn't old enough to have had much of a past. Anyway, I believe in her, and trust her, and I hope she'll think of you as well as I do, Duke!"

Then Mrs. Lawrence would have pressing business in some distant part of the house, and Duke and Louise would be left alone together. Which was just what the infatuated young man desired, and which did not appear to displease the pretty cashier.

When Duke reached his destination that night, the Lawrences and Louise were waiting for him in the parlor, dressed for the street. Louise was charming in a costume of velvet which brought her brown eyes out in good effect, and which must have cost more money than her position as cashier would pay her in a year's time. A diamond ring of great value flashed from the little finger of her left hand. Duke was devoutly grateful that it was not on the third finger! Duke had often considered the girl's velvets and diamonds, but had never reached a satisfactory conclusion concerning them. In truth, he was too much interested in the child to doubt her, so he accepted her as he found her and was happy in her companionship.

The appearance of the three in street dress told the young man that a "Night in Bagdad" had been planned. He was overjoyed at the arrangement, for Louise was always at her best on these occasions, when they roamed about the city at night as their preferences willed. Sometimes they went to a play, but oftener they rode about in streets which promised life and amusement, and ended with a supper at one of the bohemian-like all-night restaurants in the debatable land. The night crowds, so different from those of the business day, the mingling of the wealthy and well-dressed with the creatures of the underworld seemed to please Louise greatly.

On this night the play was insufferably dull, and at 11 o'clock the four found themselves in a restaurant noted for its French chef. It was a showy place, all glass and polished metal, and was well filled with guests. There was no table in the main dining hall at which the four could be seated together, and so Lawrence secured one in a little room at the back, a room which was little better than an alcove, as there was no door to it, not even a portiere.

As the four sat there chatting, waiting for their orders to be prepared, Louise called

Duke's attention to a man who was sitting at a table not far away, his profile in plain view from where they were.

"Do you know who that is?" she asked. "He's been looking keenly into this room. Do you know him?"

Almost before the words were off the girl's lips, Duke saw that the person referred to was no other than Senator May, who was red of face and evidently under the influence of liquor. The young man was sorry to see May there, because he brought with him all the bother and worry of the fight with the Iron Company, or its manager, rather. He told Louise who the man was, and suggested that no effort be made to attract his attention to the party.

"In his sane moments," he explained, "May is something of a gentleman in manners and speech, but he is not sane now, and there is no knowing what he might do. He is very angry with me, you see, and might purposely create a scene calculated to annoy the ladies. I'm sorry he is here."

"I know who the fellow is," said Lawrence. "He's attorney for the Harlan Iron Company, and therefore in the fight against you."

"I'm not fighting the Iron Company," replied Duke. "I'm at war with the worst gang of political buccaneers in the State. I don't believe the real owners of the company are behind Malone in this robber charter business."

"Is Malone heavily interested in the company?" asked Louise.

"He came to Harlan a poor man," was the reply, "but he seems to be pretty well fixed now. If he doesn't own the company at present, it won't be his fault if he doesn't very soon."

While this conversation was on, in whispers, May sat looking directly into the room. His eyes flashed angrily at sight of Duke, and once or twice he half arose as if to thrust his presence on the party.

"Do you think Malone and May are dishonest in their dealings with the company?" asked Louise. "I don't think May looks like an honorable man."

"I don't know much about their business at the mill," replied Duke, "but they have the name of being crooked in all their outside deals, so why not at the mill? Still, I believe Malone is keeping within legal requirements in his dealings with the company. He is much too shrewd to place himself in the way of a criminal charge."

"Is he a very clever man?" persisted the girl.

"Cunning is the word," was the reply. "It is hard work for a man with the brutal instincts of Malone to keep within the limits of decency, and he wouldn't put himself to the trouble of doing it only for his wife. Mrs. Malone is ambitious socially, and Dan is obliged to keep within bounds in order to maintain peace in the family. Mrs. Malone is envious of Mrs. Norman Hill, the banker's wife, and wants to drive her out of the social leadership, and Dan is helping her—about as a rhinoceros might assist at a pink tea. Dan in evening clothes is a sight to make angels weep."

"Is this banker, Mr. Hill, an honest man?" questioned Louise.

Lawrence broke into a laugh.

"We'll have to take you down to Harlan," he said, "and show you the works in full blast. My word for it, Malone looks quite respectable in working clothes, and May is a fairly decent fellow when he is sober, and isn't out for gore."

"I should like to visit Harlan and see the Iron Works, above all things," replied the girl. "I'm greatly interested in plants of that description. But you haven't answered my question, Mr. Gaylord. Do you think Mr. Hill is an honest man?"

"Honest as bankers go," replied Duke carelessly. "But this is too much shop," he added. "I get the Iron Company in my coffee at Harlan, and in my dreams at night. Let me sup without in Philadelphia."

"It looks to me," said Lawrence, "as if your friend May meant mischief. He doesn't look amiable, to say the least."

Senator May was not making a good appearance in the place. He was too much under the influence of liquor for that. Often he stared through the open doorway where the four sat, and more than once made as if to arise to his feet for the purpose of paying them a visit.

Presently a waiter came to his side, in response to a motion of his hand, and there was a short whispered conversation, during which both glanced at the party in the little room. Then the waiter, with a prolonged stare at Duke in passing, walked to the back of the place and May, with a parting scowl, moved unsteadily toward the door and stepped into the street.

"I'm glad he's gone," sighed Louise, as the street door closed on the broad back of the attorney. "All the time he was here I felt like there was a snake in the room. I shall not like Harlan if Senator May is a representative of your business and professional classes. Was this quarrel with Malone and May necessary?" she added.

"I couldn't do what they asked of me," was the reply. "Hence the fight. I don't think they mean to fight fair. To be honest about it, I'm afraid of the rascals, just as one is afraid of a wild creature lurking in the darkness to attack one unawares."

Then the talk drifted away from Harlan and the Iron Mills, and supper was served. While they were eating, two men entered by the street door, passed directly through the crowded outer room, and pushed their way into the small one where Duke and his party sat. The waiter who had whispered with May followed them at a distance.

Duke and Lawrence arose angrily to their feet as the two men, with many furtive glances at the ladies, advanced toward them. Mrs. Lawrence was plainly frightened. Louise faced the intruders with a waiting air, as if anxious that they should declare their errand there.

"Why do you enter a private dining room in this manner?" asked Duke, trying hard to control his temper. "Retire or I shall summon the police."

The man in advance chuckled and grinned broadly at his companion. The waiter, still lurking in the background, sent out a roar of forced laughter, which brought the attention of half the people in the outer room to the party, and curious ones began to gather about the open doorway.

"Come," said Lawrence, "make your business known or pass out."

"You're pretty foxy, young feller," said the man in advance, "but we're onto your curves. I reckon you know who you've got with you, there. Anyway, you're not wanted in here. This is a place for ladies and gentlemen, see? Be on your way, before I give you a ride in the patrol wagon."

The fellow threw back the lapel of his coat and revealed the shining badge of a plain clothes policeman. Astounded at the insult, at the impudence of the request, believing that the fellows must be impostors working in the interest of Malone or May, Duke drew back his arm as if to strike the sneering face thrust forward toward his own, but Lawrence, cooler of head at that trying time, held him back. Mrs. Lawrence covered her face with her hands. Louise still regarded the officers with that look of expectancy on her face. Duke beckoned to the waiter in the background.

"Bring the proprietor here," he commanded.

The waiter only grinned and looked to the plain clothes men for instructions.

"The proprietor sent for us to clear the place of you," said the officer, then, "and that means that you are not wanted here. Be on your way!"

"Why are we being turned out of the place?" asked Louise, addressing herself to the policeman.

"That'll be enough from you, my beauty," replied the officer, insolently. "I guess you know why you are not wanted here. Will you go quietly, or must we use force?"

Duke tried to push his way to the front, to stand between the girl and the officer, but Lawrence, suspicious of his intentions, held him back. When he tried to take out his card case for the purpose of showing the men who he was, his friend closed his hand over it and forced it back.

"Do you want all our names in the morning newspapers?" he asked. "No explanations here. We've got to get out."

"But the disgrace of being ejected by the police from a public place!" raved Duke. "In the interest of the ladies we ought not to permit these men to bully us out of the place. It is outrageous!"

Louise was the first to speak.

"Clear the way to the door, please," she said, "and we'll relieve the place of our presence—for the present."

Duke looked at the girl in amazement. He could not understand why she should accept the disgraceful situation so calmly. For himself, he had no notion of leaving without a full explanation, but the girl moved on as the officers, in obedience to her request, cleared the way to the door, stepped into the outer room, and the others followed. Silently ignoring the insulting glances and whispered remarks of those at the tables, they passed through the room and gained the street door.

As they did so, the door was opened from without, and the squat, assertive figure of Senator May stood revealed. There was a sneer of triumph on his bloated face as Duke passed him without sign of recognition. Louise felt the evil eyes of the fellow almost burning her blushing face as she passed him. Then they were out on the pavement with the plain clothes men and such loafers as had followed from curiosity.

"Get a cab and get away," said one of the men. "If you don't you'll have a session with the chief in the morning."

Duke checked a wrathful reply, called a cab, and they were at last away. Louise broke the silence as the vehicle turned toward the Lawrence home.

"In Bagdad," she said, "a genie, or something would have devoured the officers."

"I don't see how you can joke over it," said Mrs. Lawrence, tearfully.

"Cheer up!" cried Lawrence. "We have no knowledge, but we will have some. What's that?" he added, as a hail came from behind. "It's the officers after us again!"

"Draw up, cabby," came from behind, "or we'll send a bullet after you!"

CHAPTER III.

A SERIOUS ACCUSATION.

They all heard the startling command. Without speaking, Duke threw open the cab door and stepped out into the brilliantly lighted street, down which, half a block off, a pursuing vehicle was coming at rattling speed. Up with the driver of the pursuing rig sat one of the officers who had been left in front of the restaurant, shouting and waving his arms as if to enforce his command. It was not long before the vehicle came to a halt where Duke stood.

"You get back in there, young feller!" ordered the policeman, "and pass out that di'mond dip you're protectin'. There's been table silver taken from the restaurant, and you're all pinched. Pass her out! If she's got the silver, we don't mean to give her a chance to get away with it!"

Duke stood still, not speaking. He was too dazed for speech. To whom was the man referring as a diamond thief? Who was it that was being accused of stealing table silver from the restaurant? As if the disgrace of being ejected wasn't enough without this added indignity!

"To whom do you refer as a diamond thief?" he finally blurted out.

The plain clothes man pointed to Louise, whose face now appeared at the door, side by side with that of Mrs. Lawrence.

"There she is!" he cried, with brutal emphasis. "There's your diamond dip! She's wanted in half the cities of the world for her clever work. Come, me beauty, you're caught with the goods on," he added, addressing the girl. "Jump out here!"

To the amazement of every member of the party, Louise advanced a slender foot to the step, as if about to leave the vehicle at the officer's request. At that instant, too, the recollection was forced on Duke that it was Louise who had led in obedience to the officers at the restaurant. At a word from Duke the girl paused, and the policeman drew up as if to drag her out by main strength, but the young man faced him savagely. The limit of his endurance had been reached. He was now merely a primitive man ready to do battle for his mate. An interruption prevented a collision then and there.

Duke heard the sharp click of iron hoofs on the stone pavement, then a rider drew up at his side, and he glanced up at the sound of a friendly voice. The man on the horse was an old friend, Lieutenant William Hurley, a police officer of long service in the city. Duke grasped the outstretched hand of the officer with all the enthusiasm of a drowning man reaching for a saving plank.

"Glad to see you, Duke," said the officer. "What's coming off here? Haven't joined the night force, have you?"

"Only for your opportune arrival," replied Duke, "I'm afraid I should have become victims of the night force. These men of yours have been giving us a bad half hour."

The lieutenant turned inquiringly to the plain clothes men.

"We don't know this friend of yours," one of the men said, "nor the other man or woman in there. They're all straight as far as we know, but I guess they've got into bad company without knowing it. This other woman, the one with her foot on the step, is Nell Garlow, the diamond dip. You know who she is, lieutenant. Wanted in half the towns of the world for all sorts of crimes."

Duke stepped forward toward the speaker, but the fellow moved away, by no means as defiant as before, in the presence of a superior officer who was friendly to one of the parties he had pursued so brutally.

"The girl was recognized by a waiter at Stone's place," continued the officer, "and we were sent for to clear them out of the restaurant. Stone didn't want 'em there. After the girl and her companions left, some of the table silver was missed, and we followed in a cab and put them under arrest. The girl ought to be taken to headquarters and searched."

Duke, as the man ceased speaking, instinctively turned to the accused girl. At the moment the cab had stopped, in obedience to the command of the policeman, Louise had thrown her arm about Mrs. Lawrence protectingly, as if she were the older woman, and sought to inspire courage by the simple act. Now, Duke saw Mrs. Lawrence involuntarily shrink under the pressure of the arm. It seemed to him that both Lawrence and his wife were, for the first time, looking upon the girl with suspicion in their eyes.

Louise saw what was in the thoughts of her companion, saw Lieutenant Hurley step forward to get a better view of her, and, with a little cry of dismay, shrank back into the shelter of the cab, her hands lifted to her frightened eyes. Duke thrust himself between the door and the lieutenant and, reaching in, took the girl's hand. Her eyes softened at the thoughtful action.

"You can't believe this!" Duke said, turning to Mrs. Lawrence.

"Why, of course not."

Mrs. Lawrence was slow in her reply, and there seemed to Duke to be both doubt and embarrassment in her voice. Duke checked an angry exclamation and turned to the lieutenant.

"You know this Nell Garlow," he said, "better than either of these blunderers. Look in there and tell me if this is she."

"Of course the men are mistaken," ventured Mrs. Lawrence. "Miss Hilton is my husband's cashier, and lives in our family."

"Hilton!" cried one of the plain clothes men. "That is one of Nell's many aliases. Shall we take her in, lieutenant?"

"You will regret it if you do!" cried Lawrence.

Duke was pleased at the interruption, but, all the same he could not believe the looks of suspicion he had noted a moment before had been imaginary.

Lieutenant Hurley leaned forward into the cab and backed out again.

"I'm sorry that you should have been inconvenienced," he said to Duke. "The men have made a mistake, that is all. I know Diamond Nell as well as I know you, Duke, and the lady in there looks no more like her than you do. Don't lay this up against the department, old man!"

"I wish you would ascertain for me," said Duke, after thanking the lieutenant, "whether the waiter at Stone's recognized this lady as Diamond Nell, or whether his attention was called to her by another."

"Do you know?" asked Hurley, turning to the plain clothes men.

"He said that he recognized her the instant she entered with these people," was the surly reply. "And there's the table silver. She ought to be searched."

"I have good reason to believe," said Duke, ignoring the vicious remark of the policeman, "that the accusation was made to the waiter by a man whose purpose it was to humiliate my friends and myself. I think these men exceeded their authority in taking the course they did."

One of the men started in with an angry reply, but Hurley motioned him away.

"Forget it!" laughed Hurley, still facing Duke. "Accept through me the apologies of the department. We'll give you a gilt-edged reference any old time—you and your friends here! I'll find out about the waiter's informant, if there was one. Night!"

The busy lieutenant was on his horse again and off on his rounds. The plain clothes men, angry but impotent for further mischief, entered their cab and were driven away.

"In Bagdad," said Louise, as the cab moved on, "the genie would have consumed those officers. That was the genie who came, wasn't it?" she asked quizzically, turning to Duke. "Strange things happen in Bagdad!" she went on, without waiting for an answer.

"Awful things!" cried Mrs. Lawrence. "I'm sure I shall never get over being frightened at the sight of a police badge."

She was so friendly, so tender in her talk with Louise, that Duke came to half believe that he had been mistaken in supposing that suspicion had ever rested in her mind in connection with the girl. But the thoughts in the minds of the ladies were not put into words, which, perhaps, was just as well.

When Duke was left alone with the girl in the dimly lighted hallway of the Lawrence residence, for only a moment, she harked back to the subject of the Iron Company, much to the young man's amazement.

"Tell me," she said, in a moment, "do you think Senator May equal to planning the—the outrageous affair of tonight?"

"I have been thinking of that," replied Duke, "and it looks to me like a move in the game. Only he aimed at me and struck us all."

"And Mr. Malone? Would he be likely to approve of such a step?"

"I haven't a doubt of it," replied Duke. "Heaven only knows what tales will be told at Harlan concerning the night's doings! The men are out to ruin me, and they are not loafing on their job, either. It was May who whispered to the waiter who came with the officers, you know," continued Duke, thoughtfully.

"You haven't told me why you quarreled with them," said Louise, presently.

Then Duke, briefly, told her of the proposed railroad and the robber charter which the State Legislature would be asked to grant. Louise listened without comment, yet she seemed to understand the situation thoroughly. Then she asked:

"Would this proposed railroad be for the good of the Iron Company?"

"Undoubtedly," was the reply. "It would also be for the benefit of the Iron Company to fill its safes from the pockets of consumers by forming a combine and lifting prices, but it wouldn't be playing fair."

"And this Mrs. Hill," asked Louise, then, turning from the question of honesty, "is she a good woman?"

"The best I ever knew, except two," was the reply.

Louise blushed vividly in the dim light.

"One," Duke continued, "is my mother, and the other——"

"And do you think Malone and May mean to do the banker a mischief because he is friendly to you?" continued Louise, checking the young man's too personal utterance.

"I haven't a doubt of it," replied Duke. "Egged on by his vixenish, ambitious wife, Malone will ruin Hill if he can. And he will use the fruits of the Iron Company to do so if he sets about it."

"Does the Iron Company bank with Hill?" asked Louise.

"What questions!" laughed Duke. "We surely ought to find something more interesting to talk about than the Harlan Iron Company. For instance, you might tell me where we knew each other previous to our meeting here. I believe you could tell me if you would."

"You haven't answered my question," smiled the girl. "Does the Iron Company bank with Mr. Hill?"

"Certainly," was the reply. Duke wanted to talk about something else just then, but Louise clung to her point.

"And the mill hands? Do they put their savings in Hill's bank?"

"I believe he carries a large savings balance, coming mostly from the mill men."

"Then, if Malone should attack Mr. Hill it would be through the company's deposit and the savings department?"

Louise's face was grave, her voice low and earnest.

"Certainly," replied Duke. "I think Malone could close the bank if he should withdraw his favor from it. The employes of the mill have their savings deposits there, and the Iron Company itself carries quite a balance. If Malone should sound a note of warning and withdraw his own account, or that of the company, rather, it might go hard with the bank. It is too bad that Hill should become involved in my quarrel with the boss of the town, as Malone is called."

"And would all this ruin Mr. Hill?" asked Louise.

"Why, no, probably not, but it would make him no end of trouble," was the slow reply. "He would have to call in his loans and discounts, and that would take time. Yes, I really believe that Malone could close Hill's bank, temporarily, if he saw fit to do so. It is almost too much power for one man to have, don't you think?"

"Power over the fortunes of others should never be placed in such hands," said the girl. "Do you think the owners of the company realize what a desperate man they are handing their power to? Don't you think he would be released if they knew?"

"I really can't say," was the reply. "To be honest about it, I don't even know who are the owners of the Iron Company. I have heard that the majority interest lies with an estate somewhere in the East, but that is all. Rest assured that if I knew who to go to in order to give Malone a black eye in the estimation of his employers I should go immediately, before he gets all Harlan by the ears."

Louise was silent for a time, and Duke moved toward the door.

"It is getting late," he said. "Lawrence will be unduly sarcastic in the morning if I keep you longer. You really won't tell me where——"

Louise ignored the interrupted question. Duke had asked it in the same way a good many times, and, somehow, it had usually been interrupted!

"This Mrs. Hill," she began. "Is she a nice woman?"

"The salt of the earth," was the reply. "She's trumps in any game whatever!"

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"I think," said the girl, thoughtfully, "that I should like to meet Mrs. Hill, that I should like to visit Harlan."

"Why not?" asked Duke, his heart beating fast at the thought of seeing her every day instead of only at rare intervals. "Why not come down for a visit? Lawrence knows Hill, and you might come together, with Mrs. Lawrence, of course."

Louise was thoughtful again.

Then, before she spoke, the young man thought of his ready acquiescence in her plan with something like dismay. May would be sure to peddle the story of their ejectment from the restaurant throughout Harlan. Mrs. Malone, who disliked Duke cordially, would take it up at the command of her husband, and all society would know of the deplorable incident.

So far as he was concerned, he cared little what the people of Harlan said of him, but there was the girl to think of. If she came to Harlan, the blow aimed at him would strike her!

Louise was the one against whom a definite accusation had been made. Duke remembered that the charge had never been investigated, that release had been gained through the personal friendship of Lieutenant Hurley. And he feared that her reticence regarding her past life and her relatives would count against her. Surely, her coming to Harlan would stir up a hornet's nest of gossip. He regretted that he had given her any encouragement in the matter, and yet what was he to do?

He was sufficiently in love with the girl to desire to please her in every way in his power, and besides, it would look strangely inhospitable for him to oppose her proposed visit. The young man was in a "mix for fair," as he expressed it in his own thoughts.

"Do you think Mrs. Hill would receive us, after—after tonight?" asked the girl, in a moment, innocently putting the question Duke was asking himself.

"Mrs. Hill," smiled the young man, "will believe what I ask her to believe regarding the events of tonight."

Duke was not so sure that he was keeping within the facts, but his desire to have her at Harlan was brushing all doubts from his mind.

"Do you think Malone will permit me to see the interior of his mill if I go to Harlan as the guest of Mrs. Hill?" was the next question.

"Doubtful!" said Duke. "Malone is out for blood! However, we can get along without Big Dan, I take it. I'll arrange with Mrs. Hill. You'll find Harlan a good sort of a town even if the atmosphere is tainted with Malone and May. You'll come?"

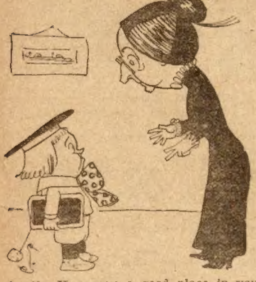
Louise replied that she would go, and Duke went away glad of her decision, but with a premonition of trouble which he could not cast off.

This startling story of love, intrigue, graft and fighting, will be continued in the Ledger issue of next week. If you are not a regular subscriber to the Ledger we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 per year; it is worth many times that amount. Send in your subscription, for many great stories that you cannot afford to miss will appear during the coming year.

Royal Beauty Recipe.

Queen Wilhelmina, of the Netherlands, is noted for the clearness and beauty of her complexion. It has just been disclosed that she has a special recipe to aid in keeping the skin in perfect condition. This recipe consists of taking what are known as lemon baths. The juice of half a dozen lemons is squeezed into the bath, after which various perfumes, imported from the Indies, are added. A lemon bath, it is said, possesses particularly invigorating qualities, which naturally make for a fine complexion. As a result of the royal example, lemon baths have become extremely popular among society women of the Netherlands, and it is expected they will soon be introduced in other European countries.

Holding His Own.



Auntie—Have you a good place in your class at school, Willie?

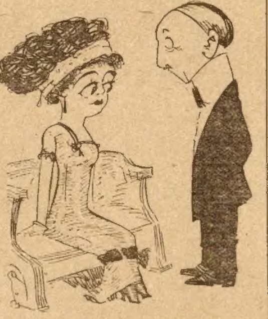
Willie—Yes, ma'am, right near the door. I'm the first one out every day.

Pickled Peppers

REVISED AGAIN FOR 1910.

Big Jack Horner
Sat in a "corner"
Carving another trust pie;
He put in a million,
Pulled out a billion,
Saying, "Oh, I'm a wise guy!"

Poor Cholly!



Cholly Cashrapper—Deahwest, some day we'll be happy.

Clara Somesense—Why, certainly! I'll be married to the man of my choice and you'll probably get some one to marry you.

A Lesson in Politics.

"Harry," said the young wife who was trying to become interested in current events that she might discuss them at the women's club, "what does the paper mean when it says the social Democrats have carried Milwaukee?"

"Why, just what it says. It's plain enough."

"But what are the social Democrats, Harry?"

"Why, they're—er—er—they're the party that carried Milwaukee."

"I should think you might be more specific, Harry. You know I don't understand anything about politics. To be sure, I know what Democrats are. They're the people what want Bryan to be President. And I know what socials are. We have them at our church every month, and they're awfully stupid. I wouldn't go near them if it wasn't a religious duty. But what are social Democrats? Does it mean that the Democrats held socials and got people to vote for them by not charging anything for the ice cream and cake? I should think that was real corrupt."

Harry looked at her with the amazement of one who had received a new revelation of the wonderful accuracy of woman's intuitions.

"Yes, my dear," he said at last. "That's about right. Only there's a little more to it. These social Democrats promise to establish a kind of government in which ice cream and cake shall be free to everybody who will eat them and only millionaires shall have to wash the dishes."

Declared Off.

"When can you spare the time for our marriage, Marion?" the betrothed man asked.

The woman consulted her engagement book. "Three o'clock next Friday afternon," she replied.

"Oh, that will be out of the question," he cried protestingly. "There's a special meeting of the Glitter Gold Company that I must attend at that time."

"Well, it's the only time I have," she told him with an air of easy resignation. "Every other hour for the next two years is filled up."

The man jerked his shoulders irritably. "I guess we'll have to call our little matter off, then," he said.

And so they parted, for with some people marriage is but an incident, and an incident is, of course, too trival to deserve the sacrifice of an event.

Tracing Its Course.

Uncle Dan'l—I noticed some o' th' papers are givin' th' daily motions of the comet an it makes mighty interestin' readin'.

Aunt Maria—What did they say about it this mornin', Dan'l?

Uncle Dan'l—Lemme see. It was somewheres due north, or south, of th' consolation of th' little dipper in the big bear country, jes' east by west of ol' Jupiter Caesar an' 'leven degrees an' seven minutes ahead of th' milky way an' gitten closer an' closer to th' left ear of th' dog-star—an' it wuz travelin' at th' rate of seven billion miles a second or less."

Aunt Maria—Well, well, ain't that interestin'?

Holding Their Own.

Two tired tourists were tramping in Switzerland. They were on their way to Interlaken, where they proposed to dine and pass the night. Late in the afternoon, when hunger and fatigue began to make walking unpleasant, they accosted a farmer.

"How far is it," they asked, "to Interlaken?"

"Two miles," was the reply.

They walked hopefully on. A half-hour passed. Interlaken was not yet in sight. So, seeing another farmer in a field, they shouted to him:

"Are we near Interlaken?"

"Keep straight forward," the farmer shouted back; "it's just two miles."

The tired, hungry tourists trudged on again. Another half-hour passed, and still no sign of Interlaken.

"Is Interlaken very far from here?" they asked a third farmer.

"No, gentlemen," said the farmer, "it is only two miles."

Then the tourists looked at one another, and the younger sighed and exclaimed:

"Well, thank goodness, we're holding our own, anyhow."

Took the Dog, Too.

"We've been troubled by burglars in our neighborhood and the other day I bought a ferocious and very expensive bulldog. Funny thing is, the burglars visited my house that very night."

"Good! Of course the new dog prevented them taking anything?"

"No, he didn't."

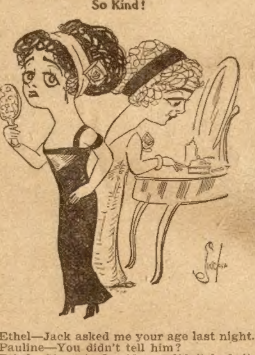
"Why, what did they take?"

"Oh, a lot of stuff—silverware and clothes, mostly."

"Good gracious! Didn't the bulldog get after them?"

"I guess he did—I haven't seen him since."

So Kind!



Ethel—Jack asked me your age last night.

Pauline—You didn't tell him?

Ethel—Oh, no! I said you didn't look it.

Hard to Check.

It was the young hubby's first tour through the big department store.

"What room is that?" he asked, innocently when they reached the second floor.

"Why, that is where they check babies," elucidated his wife.

And then the young hubby looked at the struggling infant in his arms and the buttons and pins it had dislocated and said simply:

"I wish they'd try to check this one."

His Specialty.

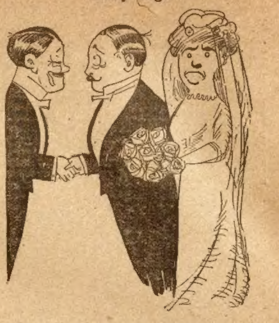
"Yes," said the operatic singer, "it is my ambition to reach the high C's."

"How congenial!" laughed the South Dakota lawyer. "Now, it is my ambition to reach the divorcees."

HARD TEST.

"Music is the food of love," but it would
really make us laugh
To see young folks start out in life with
only a phonograph.

Lucky Dog.



"But why do you congratulate me? I'm not the bridegroom—I'm only the best man!"

"That's just it!"

At the Bargain Counter.

Ordinarily Bill Donaldson is a most gallant citizen. He would upset three trolley cars to dash across the street and pick up a young woman's glove and ride horseback on the locomotive to give his seat to one of the fair sex on a railroad train, but all this is changed now.

When he came to town the other morning he balked at picking up a girl who had fallen on the slippery pavement, and kept right on going when the wind blew away another one's pretty millinery. He even refused to look at the near-ladies in the show windows.

Pressed for an explanation, Bill declared that he had soured on all womankind. The day before, he said, he had seen a bargain sale of children's coats advertised, and went to the department store to take a look. Reaching the counter he found it surrounded by women ten layers deep, and it was only by a hard struggle that he managed to wade through in time to pick up the last coat.

He was just about to buy the garment when a woman without so much as an "Excuse me," walked up and yanked it out of his hand.

"I will take this," said the woman, turning to the saleslady, while Bill stood gasping for breath, "it is just what I wanted."

"You will take it?" exclaimed Bill as he sadly hiked away, followed by a cold society glare. "You mean to say you did take it."

Mama Was Game.

Caroline, 4 years old, and precocious, sat munching at the finale of an apple.

"Throw the core in the old bucket on the back porch, dear," fond mama said.

"But, mama, it's dark out there," the youngster protested.

"Well, darkness won't hurt you. Darkness is only day with coal soot all over its face."

The argument bore no weight with Caroline. Finally, her mother gave her a look that, in this particular family, has the same meaning as the word "git."

"But, mama, I'm afraid," the little one pleaded.

"Oh, afraid, afraid, afraid, that's all I hear. I wasn't afraid when I was a little girl."

"Was you game, mama?" the youngster queried.

"Yes, of course, I was game."

"Are you still game?"

"Yes, of course, I'm still game."

"Then you take the apple core out, 'cause I ain't."

And mama was game.

Real Philanthropist.

"Good morning!" greeted the young man in the last year's straw hat.

The millionaire turned around in his plush chair.

"Er—I think you have the advantage of me, young man," he said distantly.

"Why, don't you remember me, sir? I am broke. Two years ago you told me if I ever went broke to come around and see you."

The millionaire beamed a benevolent smile.

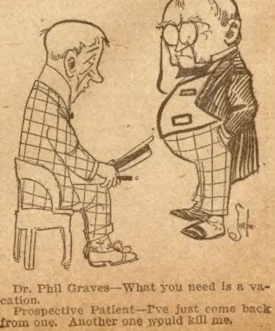
"So I did, my son, so I did. Here is the envelope all ready for you."

The young man took the bulky envelope and his spirits arose like the mercury on a July day.

"Ah, a little assistance, I suppose?"

"No, a great assistance. It is a valuable little pamphlet I wrote during my spare time, entitled: 'How to Be Broke and Happy.' "

These Vacations.



Dr. Phil Graves—What you need is a vacation.

Prospective Patient—I've just come back from one. Another one would kill me.

FINE STRAIGHT
$5 WHISKEY
$1.43
A GALLON
FINE STRAIGHT
$5 WHISKEY
$1.43
A GALLON

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For years we sold to the saloonkeeper, and built up a big trade, but expense of collecting, losses on collections, the tremendous cost of paying traveling salesmen their expenses, and the very stringent local option laws in some sections have compelled us to cut out the saloonkeeper and sell direct to the consumer for less than the saloonkeeper paid before. We can do this because we do not give credit and have no losses. The whiskey we sold on credit to saloonkeepers for $1.75 we can sell you for $1.43 per gallon, cash. Here's our offer:

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MONEY BACK without question if not as represented. Try it to your heart's content before deciding to keep it.

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A Woman Scorned;

Or, THE TRAIL OF A FLOWER

By T. C. Harbaugh

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CHAPTER V.

DOCTOR SINELLI.

THE letter which Dolly Prescott handed to Clay De Courcy when he called at the house in Wellington street in search of McQuade but added to the mystery connected with the unknown woman and the death of Calledon Sinclair.

McQuade was gone! Instead of remaining in the city and facing the future he had departed and his whereabouts were shrouded in darkness. Reading between the lines, De Courcy thought he found a ray of light, but he soon despaired. How and why the woman with the strange perfume had come into McQuade's life he could not conjecture, but that his friend feared her, he well knew.

He determined, however, to solve the identity of the woman in Waterloo avenue, and for this purpose began at once.

Back to his own lodgings he went and once more from his apartments inspected the house across the street. It was as dark and silent as before. Not a ray of light emanated from the premises and if the tenant was still there she did not let her presence be known.

He almost regretted having checked the runaway team thereby saving the life of McQuade's nemesis. Ah, if he had but known—but why bother himself with such thoughts? The deed had been done and the rescue of the queen of the stephanotis flower might blight the life of his old-time companion.

Suddenly, while he watched the house over the way, the lower door opened and a man emerged. He was a little man with a stoop and as he paused on the steps, and looked cautiously around, De Courcy studied him with all eyes.

"I'll give him a shadow!" exclaimed the young man. "The trail may lead to the woman," and with these words he was bounding down the stairs and was out on the pave.

The little one was yet in sight and De Courcy watched him like a hawk as he sauntered leisurely away.

The trail was not hard to keep and a few minutes later the eager tracker found himself in a narrow street devoted to the business of fortune telling. Almost every house for a dozen blocks was inhabited by devotees of the black art, and before one of these De Courcy's quarry halted. In another moment he was inside.

For a solid hour the young man waited for the reappearance of the stranger and at last the door opened to let him out.

"Now for another chase," said De Courcy. "The trail is getting warm and I must not lose sight of the little wretch."

He was again led through half a dozen streets until at last he ran his man down in a second-class hotel. He saw him flit through the foyer and vanish.

"Hello!" exclaimed a voice in De Courcy's ear as he entered the hostelry.

He turned to come face to face with a middle-aged person who held out his hand.

"I have just heard," said the speaker. "You have lost Sinclair."

"Yes, the head of the house is dead," replied De Courcy.

"Heart failure, I'm told."

"So Doctor Hazen says."

De Courcy would have disengaged himself from Ridpath, but the man held on.

"By the way, do you know whom I've just seen?" continued Ridpath.

De Courcy could think of no one but the man he had just lost.

"I've just seen the greatest scoundrel of two worlds—Doctor Sinelli."

"Well?"

"Hunted by at least three Governments, he seems to have taken refuge in America. He came in here but a moment ago and no doubt is now in his room."

"It was Doctor Sinelli, then?"

"What, do you know him?"

"I have never seen him before, but I have been on his trail."

"You? And why?"

"It is a long story," answered De Courcy. "In the first place, I have been tracking Doctor Sinelli because tonight he came out of a certain house."

"Oh!" laughed the other, "he is liable to come out of half a dozen certain houses. A sleeker and more dangerous man does not draw the breath of life. I wonder if the woman is here?"

The woman! In De Courcy's mind just then there was but one woman.

He felt that his face went flushed.

"The woman is here," he said with confidence. "Doctor Sinelli came out of her house."

"Birds of a feather!" exclaimed Ridpath. "There will be something doing now."

"Something has been done," was the reply. "The woman was the last person who saw Calledon Sinclair alive."

A little whistle of surprise parted Ridpath's lips.

"Would you mind telling me all you know?" he said, drawing De Courcy into a near-by corner.

"Upon one condition."

"And what is that?"

"That you tell me what you know about the woman."

"I don't know very much, but what I know is at your service."

For the next ten minutes De Courcy talked without a single interruption.

"There, you have all I know," said he in conclusion. "You know that I saved her [illegible] lose one friend by disappearance and [illegible] death."

"That woman is known across the water as the Countess Plass. In some quarters she is the 'Blighting Venus.' I have seen her at Monte Carlo where she nearly broke the bank. Then I ran across her in Rome where she had at least three princes in her net and again I found her on the Parisian boulevards in rags."

"A remarkable creature," commented De Courcy.

"A dangerous siren."

"But how did she come into McQuade's life?"

"That is a secret which has never been opened to me. So the Blighting Venus is here."

"Yes, and with Doctor Sinelli."

Ridpath broke off the end of a cigar and lit it. His face assumed a singular expression.

"Was Calledon Sinclair ever in Europe?" he asked, looking at De Courcy.

"Never."

"That deepens the mystery."

"It casts it into a shadow which is beyond my powers to lift."

"Wait!" cried Ridpath. "Doctor Sinelli is in his room. I am stopping here."

He crossed the floor to the desk and began to turn the pages of the register. De Courcy remained in his chair and waited.

"Room 336. The rascal has registered under his real name. I can make business with him. You are my friend who can remain silent. A still tongue is a good companion. Come!"

Ridpath led the way to the elevator and in a moment they were ascending to the fourth floor. Eager to come face to face with this mysterious individual, De Courcy followed Ridpath's heels and saw him pause at a certain door to which he applied his knuckles.

"Come in!" said a voice from beyond the portal and Ridpath opened the door and both entered.

In the middle of the room, seated at a small table sat the man whom they sought. He transfixed them with a pair of wondrous black eyes that possessed the gleam of a basilisk's, and the one hand which rested on the edge of the table dropped suddenly out of sight.

"I am glad to see you, doctor," cried Ridpath effusively as he advanced, holding out his hand. "You seem to have forgotten me. I am Hasket Ridpath, cosmopolitan, globetrotter and a man of the times. This is my young friend, Golliday."

The penetrating orbs were at once transferred to De Courcy's face, where they rested scrutinizingly for half a minute.

"I was present that night in the Rue de Rivoli where you delivered a lecture on the transmutation of metals," continued Ridpath with the utmost sang froid calculated to throw one off his guard. "You recall the incident and the young man who took issue with you?"

"The young ignoramus, you mean?" said Doctor Sinelli.

"You have rightly named him," smiled Ridpath. "But I haven't dropped in to recall this incident. I am glad to see you in America. You have many friends here, though you may not know it. Your learning and your original ideas——"

"Come!" almost snapped Doctor Sinelli, "I care not what my American friends think of me. I have not come here to promulgate my theories."

"No?"

"I have come for a rest. I am glad to see you, sir. I trust I may find in America the repose I so much need."

With this the speaker's lips came together with emphasis and he informed his visitors by this means that the interview, so far as he was concerned, was at an end.

"I am looking for a beautiful woman whom I encountered once in Italy," resumed Ridpath, unabashed. "Since I once saw you in her entourage——"

"Sir?" broke in Doctor Sinelli.

"I think you recall the name. My friend the Countess Plass——"

The man at the table did not show the slightest excitement.

"I do not know her. I have never met the countess," he said, calmly, and his black eyes glittered as before.

CHAPTER VI.

DE COURCY MEETS VENUS.

De Courcy, who believed that the man at the table was playing a deep game of deception, thought Ridpath had reached the end of his string.

With a coolness which he deemed his friend did not possess, he waited for Ridpath to proceed.

"I may have been mistaken," was the next sentence he heard. "Then, you do not have the pleasure of knowing the celebrated countess?"

"I have not that happiness," was the reply. "Is she really a beautiful creature?"

"An extraordinarily lovely woman," said Ridpath. "You have missed much in not knowing her."

"I may have missed nothing. It is the way one looks at such things," and for the first time a smile came to Sinelli's lips. "Is that all, Mr. Ridpath?"

"That is all. I regret that you can give me no information concerning the Countess Plass. I beg your pardon for intruding on your privacy. We will go, Golliday."

The black eyes followed them to the door. The hand which had dropped below the table came up once more and the next moment Ridpath and De Courcy were beyond the portal. Neither spoke till they were again in the foyer below.

"What do you think now?" asked Ridpath, as he turned upon his companion.

"He's a hard nut to crack. That he lied is apparent to me, but he is as cool as a cucumber."

"And, as I have told you, the greatest rascal in two worlds," was the assurance. "Now, do you know what will happen?"

De Courcy shook his head.

"The house in Waterloo avenue will promptly lose a tenant."

"Then we have played too fast?"

"But the perfume will linger," smiled Ridpath. "I shall remain and keep an eye on our newly discovered acquaintance Sinelli. The rest I leave to you, De Courcy."

Two hours later Clay De Courcy stood looking at the house across the street. The night was advancing and the thoroughfare had fallen into a quietude which had no echoes. De Courcy's eyes remained riveted on the place for some time. No one came out; no one went in.

As he was turning away the door opened and a man, whom he knew was the same person who janitored several buildings on the street, made his appearance, including the one which he occupied.

As the man stopped to light his pipe, De Courcy crossed the street and touched him on the arm before he was aware of his presence. The janitor started.

"I've lost a tenant, Mr. De Courcy," he exclaimed. "It's the funniest thing in the world. Tenants don't usually give up their rooms between two days, but——"

"Your has, Garner?"

"Yes, the lady on the upper floor. She's taken a crazy notion to get away right off. I met her in the hall half an hour ago with a suit case, all the baggage I ever saw her have, and she said she wouldn't want the rooms any longer."

De Courcy smiled. It was just as Ridpath had suspected.

"I think I can find you a tenant," he said to the janitor. "If I might see the rooms she occupied——"

"You're just the man I'm looking for!" interrupted the caretaker. "I'll show you the apartments now."

A minute later De Courcy stood in the room in the main window of which he had seen the woman of the perfume. All at once he gave utterance to a little cry and sank into a chair.

"It's nothing but a little pang," he said, laying his hand over his heart. "You know where my rooms are, Garner?"

"Yes."

"You will find a vial on the mantelpiece. It contains an anodyne for these sudden attacks. Would you mind fetching it?"

"I'll fly across the street, Mr. De Courcy," and the next moment Garner was going down the stair two steps at a time.

His footfalls had not ceased to sound before De Courcy was on his feet. The room was well furnished; there was a little closet in one corner, a bed and a dresser. De Courcy attacked the latter first. Several empty vials of perfumery stood on the marble top and he lifted one to his nostrils. The perfume that greeted him was the strange one which yet clung to the black ivory box on his mantelpiece. It was all his search of the dresser yielded.

Fearing that Garner might return before he could complete his hunt, he sprang to the closet and jerked open the door. The interior was dark. He ran his hand inside just he he heard footsteps on the stair. Garner was coming back.

All at once his hand came in contact with a bit of paper which seemed to be thrust forward for the purpose of being found. He crumpled it in his hand and went back to the chair. The next moment the door flew open and he stood face to face—not with Garner, but with the late tenant!

At first she did not see De Courcy, but turned toward the closet.

He saw her open the door and thrust in her dainty hand. A little cry escaped her lips.

The next moment she had whirled on her heels and stood face to face with him.

"Oh!" she cried, losing a little color, which she made an effort to retain. "I did not know——"

She paused abruptly and was gazing sharply into his face. Her look was returned and she may have caught the smile which appeared at De Courcy's mouth.

"I learned but a moment ago," said De Courcy, "that you have given up your rooms and I think of changing my quarters."

She did not reply for a second, for she seemed to be collecting her thoughts.

"The janitor told me you had gone," De Courcy went on, coolly. "If you haven't given up the room I must beg your pardon for my intrusion."

"The place is yours if you can bargain with the janitor," was the answer, for the woman had caught second wind. "I thought I had failed to remove all my belongings. I trust you will like the rooms. May I bid you good night?"

With this she turned and was near the door when De Courcy sprang to his feet. To lose this woman now might be to lose her forever and thus never see the mystery solved.

"Wait!" he cried. "One moment. I am here to ask you one question."

Out of her dazzling eyes flashed a light that should have kept him back. He threw himself between her and the door and turned to her a resolute face. She drew herself to her true height in the middle of the chamber and looked savagely at him. Her handsome face was utterly without color and he saw that her gloved hands were tightly clinched. He might well believe that this beautiful creature was a destroyer of men. In all his travels he had never gazed upon just such a face.

"What is it? Go on," she almost hissed.

At any moment Garner might return, but De Courcy had his back against the door and he would keep the janitor out.

Once more he looked at the woman, trying to conceive what thoughts were flitting through her mind.

"Why don't you proceed? You have no right to detain me here," she cried.

"You shall not quit this house till you have answered me," said De Courcy. "What right have you to dog the footsteps of my friend, McQuade?"

If he expected to hear a cry from her lips, he was deceived.

She did not even start at mention of the name.

(Continued on page six.)

A DETERMINED WOMAN

Finally Found a Food That Cured Her.

"When I first read of the remarkable effects of Grape-Nuts food, I determined to secure some," says a woman of Salisbury, Mo. "At that time there was none kept in this town, but my husband ordered some from a Chicago traveler.

"I had been greatly afflicted with sudden attacks of cramps, nausea, and vomiting. Tried all sorts of remedies and physicians, but obtained only temporary relief. As soon as I began to use the new food the cramps disappeared and have never returned.

"My old attacks of sick stomach were a little slower to yield, but by continuing the food, that trouble has disappeared entirely. I am today perfectly well, can eat anything and everything I wish, without paying the penalty that I used to. We would not keep house without Grape-Nuts.

"My husband was so delighted with the benefits I received that he has been recommending Grape-Nuts to his customers and has built up a very large trade on the food. He sells them by the case to many of the leading physicians of the county, who recommend Grape-Nuts very generally. There is some satisfaction in using a really scientifically prepared food."

Read the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs. "There's a Reason."

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.

One Woman's Wisdom.

"There's no two ways about it," said Blinkers, "that wife of Bawley's is a mighty clever little woman. If there were more like her there would be fewer divorces in this country."

"So?" interjected his friend Greening.

"That's what I said," rejoined Blinkers. "Did you hear what she gave her husband for a birthday present?"

"No," said Greening. "What was it?"

"A burglar-proof safe containing nearly half a million collar buttons," answered the other.

FREE ASTHMA AND HAY FEVER CURE.

D. J. Lane, a chemist at 115 Lane Bldg., St. Mary's, Kansas, manufactures a remedy for Asthma and Hay Fever in which he has so much confidence that he sends a $1 bottle by express to anyone who will write him for it. His offer is that he is to be paid for it if it cures and the one taking the treatment is to be the judge.

Disappointing.

They had moved into the neighborhood just two weeks previously.

"I'm sorry we ever made the move," said his wife.

"Why?" queried her husband.

"Oh, the neighbors are such a shiftless lot," answered his wife. "Every time I want to borrow anything they haven't got it."

FREE DEAFNESS TREATMENT

A remarkable offer made by one of the leading specialists who offers FREE TRIAL MEDICINES to all applying at once. His new treatment has cured scores of chronic cases of deafness, catarrh, head noises and asthma in their homes, after other treatments failed to benefit. Send no money. Address G. M. Branaman, M. D., 12 Gumbel Bldg., Kansas City, Mo.

Papa's Inquiry.

"I assure you, sir," said the young man who had entered the library for the purpose of asking the stern parent for his daughter's hand, "that Ethel and I are two souls with but a single thought."

"Huh!" exclaimed the s. p. "And which of you has possession of the aforesaid thought today?"

The Indian Medicine Man

can produce roots and herbs for every ailment, and cure diseases that baffle our most skilled physicians, who have spent years in the study of drugs.

From the roots and herbs of the field originated Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, which for thirty years has proved more potent and efficacious in curing female ills than any combination of drugs known.

Product of Fashion.

"Boys will be boys," quoted the home-grown philosopher.

"How about girls?" we asked, being of a cynical turn.

"Oh, they have to be whatever the fashion makers dictate," answered the philosophy dispenser.

Nipped in the Bud.

"By the way," queried Shortleigh, "which is proper to say, 'Lend me $5' or 'Loan me $5'?"

"Well," rejoined DeLong, "as far as I am concerned, it won't do you any good to say either."

FAT PEOPLE'S MISERY.

The approach of warm weather brings misery to all fat people and death to many. Obesity (over-stoutness) is a disease that shortens life ten to forty years by blocking up the vital organs with unhealthy fat so that the blood circulates badly, the heart, stomach, kidneys, etc., cannot perform their functions properly and a general condition of feeble health and premature old age is certain, unless the sufferer's life is cut off suddenly by heart failure, heat collapse, sunstroke, apoplexy or some other awful fatality.

Everybody knows how over-fatness spoils the figure and ruins the complexion.

There's no use in trying to permanently, quickly and safely reduce weight by patent medicines as those who have wasted time and money upon this delusion can testify. The Bradford method acts with remarkable quickness and the health, as well as beauty, is restored. A proof treatment can be obtained free, postpaid (in plain package) by any reader who writes H. C. Bradford, M. D., 20 E. Twenty-second Street, 46E, New York, N. Y. Correspondence is strictly confidential and you are not put under the slightest obligation by accepting this free offer.

Not Always.

"Anyway," said the fair maid, who was long on philosophy, "it is better to laugh than to cry."

"Not always," rejoined the young widow. "If you are trying to manage a husband it is better to turn on the briny flow."

Fad to Be Fadless.

She—What is your fad?
He—I haven't any fads.
She—Oh, that's your fad, is it?

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ADDRESS ALL LETTERS TO
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GENTLE JABS.

A girl isn't necessarily an angel because she's fly.

How we dislike the dentist who spares no pains!

Did you ever notice how much legal argument is piffle?

Some animals multiply rapidly and some snakes are adders.

A genius is a man who tries to borrow money—and gets it.

A man may retain his good name if he can keep out of politics.

There are statesmen who are willing to let the people have anything they can't get away with themselves.

Wilbur Wright declines to marry for the reason that if he had a wife who really loved him she would be constantly worrying every time he went flying. Since he doesn't intend to give up flying he doesn't see his way clear to matrimony. That will serve as an excuse to offer the public, but the real reason is that he isn't in love at this moment with any girl that he can get to marry him. If it were just a matter of taking a wife there are plenty of athletic girls who are crazy on flying, any one of whom would accompany him on all his trips either as a passenger or in an airship of her own. That needn't bother him for a minute. Just let him wait until he falls in love and he will find that he is harder hit than the average man who falls from a balloon. Then he won't think about giving up flying or keeping it up. He will load the girl into his latest double-seated aeroplane just the moment he can get her consent and sail away to the minister's.

The best efforts should be made to keep the clothing in a sanitary condition. The importance of fresh air in bedrooms and clothes closets cannot be overestimated. It is not at all unusual for people to come in from the street, remove their clothing, hang it up in a small clothes closet, perhaps against a warm chimney, and then shut the door and go away, without a thought of the dangers that lurk in the stuffy atmosphere thus created. The hems of the skirts have swept all sorts of rubbish and disease germs from the damp pavements, and these are allowed to propagate in this stifling air. When the garments are wanted they are taken down, given a hurried shake, or, under favorable circumstances, a thorough brushing in the room, filling the apartment with deadly germs, any one of which may lodge in a sensitive throat or head, or upon some unprotected portion of the body, and lay the train for a long series of ills, with, perhaps, a serious result.

Every house ought to be provided with an open-air closet, where all garments worn in the street could be hung until they could receive a good brushing, which should be done in the open air, in a good breeze, if possible.

Sunshine, while it unquestionably harms some descriptions of clothing, helps to preserve the health; and garments that can be so exposed should be put into the bright sunlight for some portion of the day after they have been worn on the streets of a city.

It is well worth while, if one can, to have two suits of clothing, to be worn on alternate days. This gives one an opportunity to become sanitary while the other is in use. Besides, it is extremely uncomfortable to put on a garment that is laden with perspiration, and has not had time to become thoroughly dry. After a few wearings, the clothing of certain people becomes charged with an odor of perspiration that is anything but agreeable.

(Continued from page five.)

In all the world, thought De Courcy, there was no cooler creature.

"So that is your question? I know no such man!" she lied.

"Prevarication will not satisfy me," was the retort. "You are Cletus McQuade's nemesis. Why?"

The answer came in a manner that thrilled every fiber of De Courcy's frame.

One of the gloved hands leaped upward and he saw clutched in it a dagger, whose long, slender blade glistened in the light of the electric bulb.

"Spy! dog!" cried the woman. "I know you now. You are the man who stopped my horses. I have rewarded you. Stand aside!"

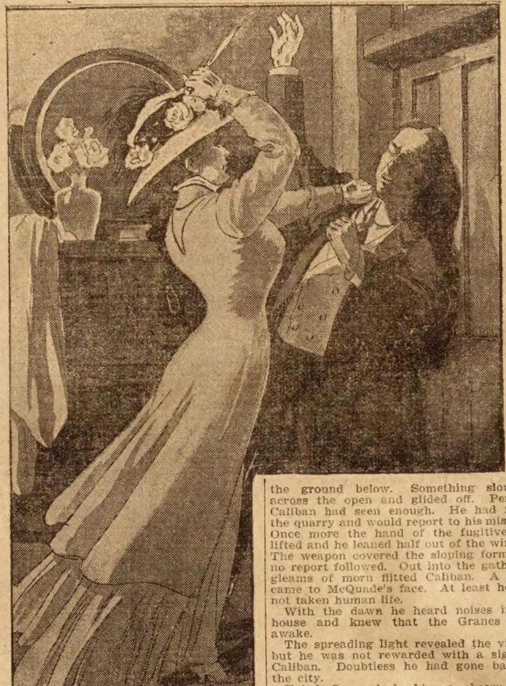
She bounded forward with the uplifted steel and her face aflame.

"Not so fast, my countess," said De Courcy, moving not. "This is a game two can play at, my Blighting Venus."

At mention of the last words a cry leaped into his very face.

"I kill! I have killed before!" she exclaimed.

"I doubt it not," was the cool rejoinder. "You have already driven my friend into exile. You are the last person who saw Calledon Sinclair alive. Must all men perish who inhale the perfume of the Madagascar flower?"



She was upon him like a wolf.

She was upon him like a wolf.

De Courcy threw out his hands to ward off the blow, but he was not quick enough to prevent it.

He was pressed against the door by the infuriated beauty; her flashing eyes seemed to burn his cheeks; he saw the dagger descend, not once but three times in lightning succession; he felt the cold steel in his body and then came darkness.

It was all the work of a single terrible moment and when he opened his eyes he saw the figure of Garner bending over him.

"I couldn't find the bottle," said the janitor, and he fell back with a horrifying cry.

De Courcy, who had fallen to the floor, caught sight of a dark splotch on the carpet. It was a pool of his own blood, and then that horrible darkness came on again.

CHAPTER VII.

McQUADE AND THE SPY.

Leaving De Courcy and the late tenant of Waterloo street for a brief period, let us return to Cletus McQuade, whom we left in the home of the Granes at Lost Haven.

It will be recalled that the young man upon awakening after his first sleep in the guest chamber beheld a human figure creeping toward the house. Not only this, but when the skulker reached the sloping roof the fugitive recognized him as the strange being known as Caliban. McQuade was not wholly unacquainted with the wretch, for on more than one occasion while abroad he had seen him in company with the Countess Plass, known familiarly as the Blighting Venus.

That Caliban by some means had ferreted him out, McQuade did not doubt, for his presence on the roof demonstrated this and for some time he watched him with a revolver in his hand.

What was easier than to shoot the spy and give the alarm that he had dispatched a would-be burglar? This would have cleared him of all blame and the outer world would still be far from the secret he carried in his bosom.

Yet he hesitated.

Nearer and nearer came the spy. McQuade, watching him with alert eyes, kept back in the shadows of the little room. He saw him approach the window sill and knew that in a few moments he would be looking into his very face.

The woman of the perfume had sent this hound upon his trail.

How and when she had discovered his flight from the city he did not know. Sufficient was the knowledge that he was there doing his mistress' bidding.

"A little nearer!" thought McQuade. "One more crawl and there will be a dead man on the roof."

His nerves rose and fell as he regarded the crawler. It was absolute torture.

At last a hand was laid on the half-rotten sill and a head came into full view.

McQuade saw the gleaming, animal-like eyes of Caliban and knew that they were searching for him.

He raised the weapon and leveled it at the intruder.

In another moment the soul of Caliban would have gone to its Creator, but just then the unexpected happened.

Instead of proceeding further the man on the roof fell back. His head was suddenly lowered and McQuade saw him creeping away. What had happened?

In another moment Caliban was at the edge of the roof and then his body disappeared.

McQuade breathed freer and watched the ground below. Something slouched across the open and glided off. Perhaps Caliban had seen enough. He had found the quarry and would report to his mistress. Once more the hand of the fugitive was lifted and he leaned half out of the window. The weapon covered the sloping form, but no report followed. Out into the gathering gleams of morn flitted Caliban. A smile came to McQuade's face. At least he had not taken human life.

With the dawn he heard noises in the house and knew that the Granes were awake.

The spreading light revealed the village, but he was not rewarded with a sight of Caliban. Doubtless he had gone back to the city.

Tubal Grane bade him a cheery good morning when he went below and the woman was in the best of humor. After breakfast he sauntered out of the village intent on visiting one of the scenes of his boyhood, the banks of the creek which rippled through a clump of woodland near-by.

Bending his steps in that direction, he found the old swimming hole and for a moment, forgetting the present, he sat down on the verdant bank and was a boy again.

Almost suddenly the belief that he was not entirely alone in the sylvan scene took possession of him. Casting his eyes cautiously around he spied out the land looking here and there in mute search of the one who must be near.

At first he saw no one, but suddenly he caught sight of the top of a human head which rose over a fallen tree a short distance away. McQuade seemed to see it not, but all the same he noted the object with discerning eyes and believed that the orbs of Caliban were fixed upon him.

To be watched by this man irritated him. It sent his blood swift and hot through his veins.

"I'll have it out with her spy!" he cried to himself, and springing up he bounded toward the spot with the revolver once more in his clutch.

There was a little half stifled cry as a figure rose from behind the log and confronted him. The recognition was mutual.

"Not a word! not the lifting of a hand!" commanded McQuade in stern tones. "You have been playing spy, and the doom of spies is death."

There was no answer. The dancing eyes in Caliban's head seemed to retreat into their cavernous depths. He looked up into McQuade's face and grinned.

"Who sent you hither?" demanded the young man. "I am in no humor to listen to lies."

His mien must have told Caliban this.

"Sit on the log yonder," went on McQuade. "Now, that's it. You can talk, eh?"

"I'm no mute, of course," was the reply.

"I know that. I've heard you chirp across the sea."

"What is it you want to know?"

"Who put you on my trail? Was it the countess?"

"How know you I have been tracking you?"

"I saw you on the roof. Had you moved another inch forward I would not be here talking to you."

It was evident that Caliban understood.

"Now, go on," continued McQuade. "She found out that I had left the city?"

"Yes."

"She put you after me? For what?"

"I am not custodian of her secrets," growled the little man.

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"But her slave—her hound, just the same!"

"Call me what you will, but I am Caliban."

"Oh, I know that," smiled McQuade. "When did your mistress come to America?"

"One month ago this very day."

"What is her mission here?"

"That is her secret, I say."

"Come, no lies!" hoarsely cried the fugitive. "You see before you a desperate man."

The little eyes dropped from McQuade's face to the weapon he held in his hand.

"Proceed," McQuade commanded. "A lie leaves you where you are at this moment."

"I tell nothing."

The words came like a determined hiss through Caliban's teeth.

The one before him saw that he had thrown his whole soul into his reply.

Slay Caliban, McQuade could not. Though he knew that this wretch would report his whereabouts to the Blighting Venus, he could not thrust the weapon into his immobile face and press the trigger. Yet his innermost spirit urged him to the deed.

"You have served your mistress in more lands than one," he said. "You were with her at Monte Carlo; she made use of you in Paris and in Rome. You may have killed at her bidding. You would slay if she gave the command."

Caliban nodded.

"Don't you hold your life at anything?" continued McQuade. "Is your existence of no value to you, Caliban?"

"I serve my lady with no fear of the future."

What could McQuade do? He laughed in his inmost soul at the slavish perversity of this man.

"You will go back to her?" he said at length.

"Yes."

"You will tell her that you found me."

"I will tell the truth."

"Does she want me because of the little episode at the ball of the grand duchess?"

"You were there," said Caliban.

"I was there. And she seeks me for what happened in those blazing halls that night?"

There was no reply, but the eyes of the spy seemed to emit a new glitter.

"Because I—well, never mind," said McQuade. "Go back and tell your soulless mistress that I am here. Tell her that you have found Cletus McQuade, the American. Say to her that the gantlet which she thrown down will be taken up. By the way," and he leaned toward the silent man on the log, "what has become of the doctor?"

"Aha! you know the doctor, then?" grinned Caliban.

"Yes. Is he in this country?"

"Yes."

"Tell both of them that I am here among the scenes of my boyhood. Now, go!"

Caliban rose slowly from the log and pulled himself together. His gaze was still riveted on McQuade. With a last look he sloped away and the American, watching him, saw his figure vanish among the trees. Not once had Caliban looked back, and at last with a white face McQuade turned and walked toward the drowsy village.

CHAPTER VIII.

DOLLY PRESCOTT'S VISITOR.

In a well but not luxuriously furnished apartment in the city stood a brilliantly handsome woman. Her rich gown fitted to a nicety the superb figure she owned, and her eyes roved round the place in a half tigerish manner. On the table before her lay an unsheathed dagger with the needle-like point directed toward her. She stepped forward suddenly and picked it up.

"He felt the point last night!" she exclaimed. "The fool tried to hold me captive. He got what was coming to him. I have not forgotten the insult at the ball of the grand duchess and he has paid the penalty!"

Throughout the room lingered a subtle odor. It seemed everywhere. It emanated from her garments, it appeared to cling to the ruffles at her swan-like throat, and any one would have known by this scent that she was Dozia, the Countess Plass.

"When he comes again—but ah! he will not come!" he went on. "He has felt this steel and they who feel it will never come again."

At this moment her ear caught the sound of footsteps, and she leaned expectantly toward the door. With the shining blade of the Italian dagger lying along her slender arm, she waited for the person outside.

A low rap sounded on the door and in answer to her "Come in," it opened and Caliban stood before her.

She started slightly at sight of him, but recovered in a second.

"Well?" she said in a melodious voice.

"I am back," was the reply.

"And you found him?"

"When have I failed, my mistress?"

"You have never failed me. You are the one perfect sleuth-hound of the world."

Pleased with this compliment Caliban dropped into a chair and raised his eyes to the countess' face.

"Where is he?" she went on.

"He has taken refuge across the river. He is back among the scenes of his boyhood."

"Ah, he really had a youth? He did not see you?"

The face of Caliban underwent a quick change.

"He found me—in the wood."

"And you told him——"

"He was armed. He thrust a weapon into my face——"

"Wretch! monster!" interrupted the woman as she sprang forward and the dagger was raised above Caliban's head. "You gave away my secret? You told the American that I sent you upon his trail? You—oh, I should serve you as I served the other one last night!"

Without a word the hands of Caliban bared his bosom and regarded her in silence.

"I am yours, mistress," said he, eyeing her. "You have but to strike and forever lose your slave."

The next moment the weapon fell to the woman's side and she drew back.

"What did he say?" she inquired in lower tones.

"I bring you his defiance."

"What? Does he defy me—Dozia, the Countess Plass?"

"He referred to the incident of the ball."

"He has not forgotten, then?" and she laughed so strangely that a faint smile stole to Caliban's lips.

"Go back to him. Nay, I will go myself—when I am ready!" she cried. "So he remembers the ball of the grand duchess? So do I," and from the look that leaped from the woman's eyes the little man in the chair seemed to shrink.

"You see me in new quarters," she went on. "I have left the old ones. Something happened last night. Never mind what it was. I brushed one dog from my path. But one remains now. I am going out. You may keep ward here, Caliban, if you like. I shall not need you till I return."

Caliban watched her whilst she prepared to leave the room and when the door had closed behind her he sprang up and clinched his little hands.

"I serve her till the death," said he. "I have served her long. She will find the American and then we will go back to the old world where I shall be at home again."

If he could have followed his mistress he would have seen her turn into Wellington street and rap at the door of a well-to-do house.

Into the face which appeared, Dozia stared with a grim smile. She spoke pleasantly to the young girl and was admitted, but in the hall Dolly Prescott stopped and turned inquiringly to her visitor.

"I have called to see your roomer," said the countess. "I am an old friend of Mr. McQuade's."

Dolly gave a little start and once more sought the marvelous eyes that confronted her.

"Mr. McQuade is not here," she answered when she caught her breath.

Dozia put on an air of disappointment.

"Then, may I see his room?" she asked. "He may have left a message for me."

"I found no message for any one when I tidied his room."

"He has queer ways, has my friend," put in Dozia. "I know them all. He was to have left a message for me.'

"You shall look for yourself," and Dolly led the way upstairs and opened the door of Cletus's chamber.

In went the countess and closed the door behind her. Dolly, with a smile for her assurance, retreated below and waited.

If she could have witnessed the actions of Dozia in McQuade's room her suspicions would more than have been verified. Dozia for a moment stood in the middle of the room and then sprang toward the table that stood in the center. The odor of stephanotis was already permeating the place.

Her hands ran rapidly through a few papers that lay on the parti-colored cloth. She tossed these aside with a gesture of disappointment and turned to a trunk in one corner.

The lid was down, but the trunk was not locked. She lifted the lid and became absorbed in the contents that greeted her eyes.

All at once she snatched from the depths before her a bit of paper at which she gazed with distended eyes. It was a menu in French and as she read all color left her face and her hands trembled.

"So he has saved this souvenir of that night?" she cried. "He has kept the menu to remind him of the insult that crimsoned my cheeks and sent my blood like a lava current through my veins. The wretch! Oh, I shall wipe out that insult in his blood and thus would I rend the keeper of this souvenir!"

The next moment she was tearing the scented sheet to pieces and casting them at her feet. She was not contented with this, but she ground each fragment beneath her heel while from her throat poured execrations upon McQuade's head.

She found nothing more in the trunk to inspire her rage and at last rose to her feet.

On the mantelpiece stood a photograph of a young girl in the first flushes of beauty and this she snatched away.

"His newest love!" she exclaimed, holding it at arms' length. "If she were here I would treat her thus!"

Out from the depths of her bosom came the dagger and the next moment it had pierced the picture. Then, for the first time she saw that it was the counterfeit presentment of the girl who had admitted her to the house. She laughed as she cast the picture aside and it fell at her feet.

In another moment the beautiful siren was at the door and her foot crossed the threshold.

A strange cry passed her lips, for upon the stair, almost at the top, stood Dolly.

The young girl uttered a cry as she caught sight of the lustrous eyes that transfixed her. She had never in her simple life encountered such fascinating orbs.

"You're pretty, girl," cried the countess. "He loves you, I suppose?"

Dolly flushed to the temples and fell back. What did the strange woman mean?

The next second the countess had bounded forward and her grip tightened on Dolly's arm. The girl drew back almost shrieking with pain, for the long fingers of the woman seemed to meet in her white flesh.

"Confess!" the countess exclaimed, dragging Dolly forward. "Tell me the whole truth. He has made love to you?"

"To—me?" stammered Dolly.

"To you, witch!" was the retort. "He has said honeyed words to you, little one?"

The distracted girl shook her head.

Just then the eyes of Dolly Prescott caught the daggered portrait of herself on the carpet. She fell back the full length of her quivering tether and gazed breathlessly into the menacing eyes that were fastened on her face.

She could not speak from very fright and fear.

"I have nothing for you, child!" cried Dozia. "But I have much for him!" and with this she dropped the arm she held and poor Dolly staggered back with a gasp.

When she recovered she was alone. She saw the fragments of the menu on the floor and shrank from them, for they recalled the exciting experience she had just passed through. She covered her face with her hands and tottered away. What had become of the strange woman? And why had she cried that Cletus had made love to her?

At last she regained, in part, her composure and as her sleeve came almost in contact with her face she uttered a little cry.

A singular perfume seemed to rise from her garment. She had never inhaled anything like it.

"What manner of creature is she?" cried Dolly. "In the name of Heaven, why does she hate Cletus? Where is he? Oh, that I could warn him. Did he flee from this woman? And why?"

Unable to answer the questions that rose to her lips she stood for a minute longer in the room and then staggered out. The hall below was untenanted. The whirlwind of passion was gone.

Trembling like a leaf, Dolly opened the door and looked out. No one was in sight.

Down another street a taxicab was whirling over the stones. Reclining in its depths a woman was smiling grimly to herself. The Countess Dozia, with the old passion of vengeance in her eyes, was silent among the dark drab cushions.

At last the "taxi" halted and the woman sprang out. Into a large building she rushed and straight to the elevator.

"Fourth floor!" she said to the startled boy, and when she had been safely landed she bounded down the corridor and pushed open a door upon which, in gilt, gleamed the number 336.

A little man whose back was turned toward her whirled at sound of her voice and came forward.

"Well, my dear?" said Doctor Sinelli. "You come in like a thunderstorm."

"I am a whirlwind of vengeance! He has escaped me!" and with this the Blighting Venus became a white statue before the amazed doctor

The conclusion of this extraordinary story will be found in the Ledger issue of next week. Read it. If you are not a regular subscriber to the Ledger we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 per year.

Ways of Baking Bread.

"In visiting Greece I was struck with the primitive ovens built behind most of the houses in small towns. These were like large beehives, built of clay; they were evidently solid up to the sole, then had the arched roof over, with a door at one side.

"They are heated with fires of straw and twigs and when ready for use are swept out, the dough put in and the opening stopped up with stones and clay till the bread is cooked. Structures like these are typical of the ovens found in many lands where men have had to evolve appliances for various uses from the materials they had at hand.

"Thus in some places we find holes dug in the earth and lined with stones, in which a fire is kept burning till sufficient heat is raised, the bread being then put in and a stone laid over the opening, with a fire on it to keep up the cooking heat.

"In these ovens, we are told, the South Sea Islanders bake their bread, fruit and yams and roast their pork, and doubtless they answer the purposes very well. In some Eastern countries fire is put into a large earthern jar with small mouth and sloping sides, the cakes of bread being stuck on the outside of the jar to bake.

"Then we know the old-fashioned griddle, so much used in old Scotch farm houses, on which scones, bannocks and oatcakes are fired. This is also employed in Scandinavia for baking the universal 'Fladbrod,' and it is also in use in many other countries in various shapes.

"In Cornwall the old kettle style of oven is still used for home baking, the dough being laid on the hot hearthstone with a large, round iron pot inverted over it. Fire outside of this keeps up the baking heat and the Cornish 'kettle bread' is very good eating, indeed, even if it is a little puddingy in the center sometimes.

"Even more primitive means of baking have to be used sometimes, as when the Australian digger rolls up his 'damper' in leaves and covers it with hot ashes; but still, all methods from hot stones to draw plate ovens are used for the one great purpose, to make bread, and the variety of means used for this end go to show the universal importance of that article. Regular bakehouses with proper ovens seem to have been in use, however, for hundreds of years, and doubtless many relics of them are still in existence."

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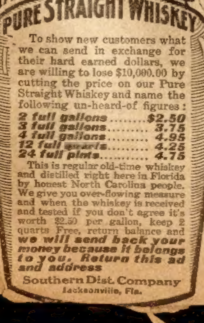

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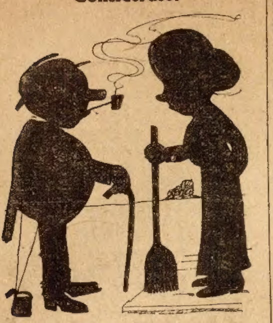


Lady—If you have a family, why don't you return to it?

Tramp—Well, you see, lady, me wife has all she can do now ter support six children and I don't want ter be a burden to her.

He Had Done More.

Mrs. Handtomouth—Mrs. Johnson told me that on every anniversary of her wedding she has worn her wedding dress.

Mr. Handtomouth—Did you tell her what I had done?

Mrs. Handtomouth—What you had done? What do you mean?

Mr. Handtomouth—Why, I not only on my wedding anniversary but on every other day have worn my wedding trousers.

Negotiations Off.

Stallits—I thought you were going to marry the Jones girl?

Turnerdowns—That was my intention, but when I became better acquainted with the girl I decided she didn't use suitable language.

Stallits—Didn't use suitable language?

Turnerdowns—That's what I said; she used "No" instead of "Yes."

Just a Bluff.

"Have you threatened our neighbors with war?" inquired the president of the small republic.

"I have. Our neighbor to the north immediately began to lay down two battleships. Our neighbor to the south proposes to lay down four battleships."

"In that case I guess we'd better lay down."

WOODSHED DIPLOMACY.

The woodshed door was part ajar,
And dad stood with his shingle;
When up spoke Johnny: "You've gone too far—
Ere you start my nerves to tingle,
When wood is scarce as it can be,
And needed by the nation,
Don't wear out shingles on such as me—
Go study conservation!"

Charging the Enemy.

Dr. Gorem—Yes, my boy, I have fought for my country.

Boy—Weren't you scared, pa?

Dr. Gorem—Scared? I guess you wouldn't think so if you had seen me charge the enemy.

Boy—You charged 'em all right, I bet, but you couldn't make 'em pay, could you?

A Great Performance.

Guest—Who kept up that terrific pounding on the piano last night?

Host—It was next door.

Guest—A great annoyance, isn't it?

Host—Indeed it is. I'd like to play on that piano for an hour—with a hose.

Not Consistent.

"Yes, I was fined $500 for putting coloring matter in artificial butter."

"Well, didn't you deserve it?"

"Perhaps. But what made me mad was that the judge who imposed the fine had dyed whiskers."

An Effective Story.

"I see that Bix has made a fortune with his pen."

"That absurd writer? Impossible!"

"Not at all. His father died of grief after reading one of his stories and left Bix $50,000.

He Was Lucky.

First Burglar—I tackled the residence of a real-estate agent last night.

Second Burglar—Did you get anything?

First Burglar—Yes, I got away without buying a house and lot.

Forced to Retrench.

Bingham—Smiley doesn't appear to have as many friends as he once had.

Stringham—No; business was bad and he had to cut down expenses.

Not Up to Date.

"Was theirs a fashionable wedding?"

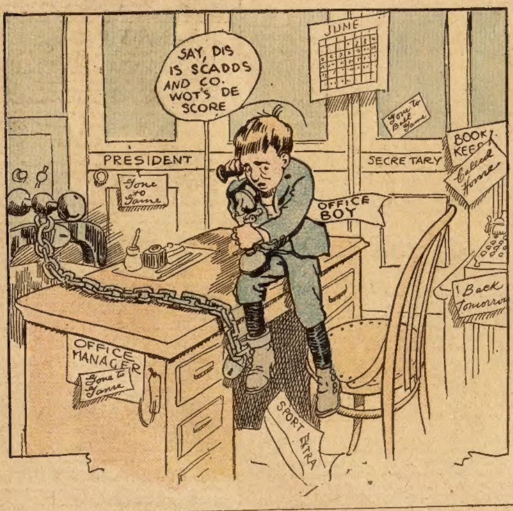
"I guess not. They didn't have to call out the police to keep the crowds back."

Experience Necessary.

"Why do you advertise for an experienced boy to work in a drug store?" asked a customer. "I should not think experience would be necessary for an errand boy."

"That's where you're mistaken," replied the druggist. "I want a boy who has eaten his fill of candy and ice cream somewhere else."

THE BASEBALL SEASON.



Not Much of a Change.

Kelso—Swearmans, the cabinetmaker, is doing mission work now.

Mrs. Kelso—Doing mission work? Do you mean to say that that profane man has so radically changed as that?

Kelso—Oh, I don't call it much of a change; he is simply making mission furniture.

Good News for the Deaf.

A celebrated New York Aurist has been selected to demonstrate to deaf people that deafness is a disease and can be cured rapidly and easily in your own home. He proposes to prove this fact by sending to any person having trouble with their ears a trial treatment of this new method absolutely free. We advise all people who have trouble with their ears to immediately address Dr. Edward Gardner, suite 313, No. 40 West Thirty-third street, New York City, and we wish to assure them that they will receive by return mail, absolutely free, a "Trial Treatment."

Wise.

Mr. Jackson—You want to marry my daughter? Why, she's only a child.

Tom Rigby—Well, I thought I'd get around early before the rush begins.

Too Slow.

The Butcher—Isn't Hester clerking for you any more?

The Grocer—No;I fired him three months ago. He was too slow; it took him so long to say "yes" when a customer asked him if our eggs were fresh that he raised doubts in the customer's mind.

At the Side Show.

The Strong Man (exhibiting himself)—Now I will show you the development of my arms and shoulders and bust.

Silas Hayrick—Hey, wait a minute. Lemme git out of here afore you bust.

The Inexpensive Simple Life.

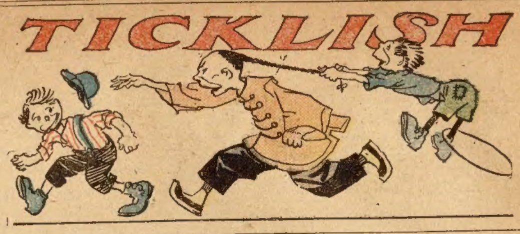
Dobbs—So you've moved to the country for the summer. Was anything broken in the transit?

Bobbs—Yes; I was.

Handy Things to Have.

"Hard-workin' wife you've got, Bill."

"Yes, I wish I'd a couple more like her."



Unfounded.

Sister—I feel wretched. I found a dark hair on the suit my husband wore last summer.

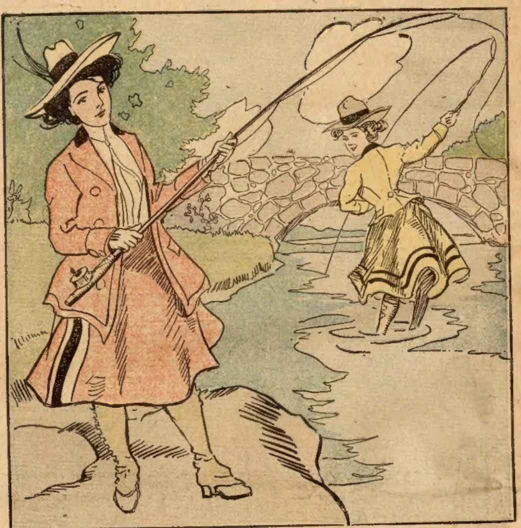
Brother—Don't worry, my dear. If you remember, your hair was dark last year.

Now They Don't Speak.

Miss Antique—They say she is awfully homely. What does she look like, anyhow?

Miss Comely—Well—er—er——she resembles you as well as anybody.

ALL MADE UP.



Natica (casting fly)—Now, when girls fish for a husband they never use artificial bait.

Gladys—Oh, yes, they do.

Natica—When?

Gladys—Why, when some of them try to attract the unwary men by their looks.

Terrible Nervous Strain.

A rather seedy looking man hurried excitedly down from the rear car to the one ahead. "Has any one got any whiskey?" he shrilly inquired. "A lady back there has fainted."

Half a dozen flasks were offered instantly. Seizing one, he looked at it critically, uncorked it, put it to his lips, and took a long, lingering pull.

"Ah!" he exclaimed with gusto, "I feel better now. Seeing a woman faint always did upset me."

Her Sad Finish.

"Did you ever know a girl to die for love?"

"Yes."

"Did she just fade away and die because some man deserted her?"

"No; she married the man she loved and had to take in washing and work herself to death to support him."

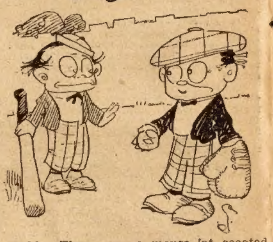
Kicked the Wrong Suitor.

Miss Bear—Won't you come in, Mr. Rabbit?

Mr. Rabbit—No, thank you Miss Bear. Your father kicked me out once. That's enough. I'm no pig.

Miss Bear—Oh, there's no danger today. The porcupine called last night.

So Ignorant!



Teddy—There wuz a mouse 'at scooted right under me bed last night an' I didn't know what it wuz at first.

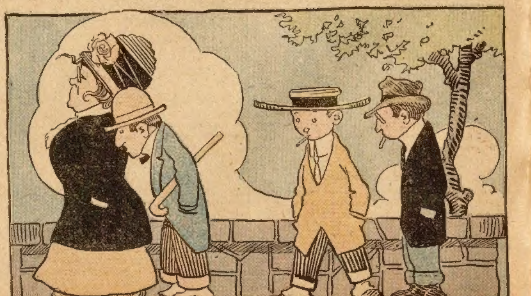
Tom—Huh! Ain'tcher ever studied botany?

Strenuous Life.

He—We've got to economize.

She—Yes, dear. You cut out tobacco and drinks and walk to and from work, and I'll—er—chop out my chewing gum.

DEVELOPED.



Arthur—He used to be quite a dude.

Algernon—Yes, and since he married her he's quite subdued.

Mother's Sympathy.

"Mother," he said, putting his arms around her and kissing her on the brow, "I am going to marry the sweetest, the loveliest, the noblest girl in the world."

Looking up into his eyes the good lady, by a great effort, managed to keep back her tears as she answered in broken tones, "My poor boy!"

Couldn't Help It.

Mrs. Panther—My dear, you must not have anything to do with Mr. Mountain Lion. That young cub will never amount to anything.

Dolly Panther—Oh, you're mistaken, mother; he's sure to catamount to something.

A Satisfactory Investigation.

First Statesman—How is the official investigation into those boodle charges coming on?

Second Statesman—Splendidly, splendidly. We've succeeded in not finding out a thing.

Hard Luck.

Cholly—I always call on Gwendolyn when her father's at his club.

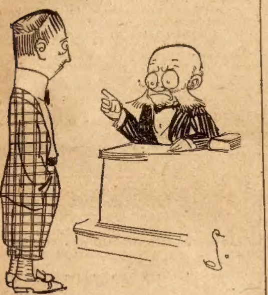
Reggie—It always seems to be my luck when he has his club at home.

Circles—Not Yet.

She—Your brother is known in baseball circles, isn't he?

He—In baseball curves, you mean.

All Not Lost.



Professor of History—I don't believe you remember a single date.

The Freshman—Oh, yes I do. There's one date I'll never forget. It's 1732; but I can't for the life of me think what happened then.

Why Discharged.

Beers—Why did you discharge your bookkeeper—didn't he make proper additions?

Townsend—Oh, his additions were proper enough; but his subtractions were most scandalously improper.

A Proposal.

"We used to be sweethearts when we were kids," said the man.

"We did," said the maid.

"Since then I have been divorced three times. And you?"

"Twice."

"Well, now that we happen to be unmarried simultaneously, suppose we hitch up?

Thought Quickly.

"What is a totem pole?" his wife asked.

"A totem pole" he said, thinking fast, "is the rail—or pole—on which an objectionable citizen is ridden—or toted—out of the community."

A Trifle Ambiguous.

Max—Don't you like the sawdust circle?

Dax—Are you talking about the circus or cocoanut pie?

His Best Asset.

Dr. Kidd (starting on his daily round)—Jove, but I feel sorry for the fellows who can't raise a beard! Nothing like a beard to give people confidence in a young doctor.

Forethought.

"How is it that your house escaped in all the other robberies in the block?"

"We took care to have good police protection."

"How did you manage it?"

"We've got the best-looking cook in the block."

Sarcastic.

Society Woman—I see by today's paper I am referred to as "one of fashion's butterflies."

Her Husband—Considering the way you go through clothes I should think moth would apply better.

His Constituents.

"Ever have 'em strew flowers in your path as you returned home, Senator?"

"Naw. I'm satisfied not to have 'em strew banana peelings."—Louisville Courier Journal.

Overflowing.

Henderson—Your wife has such a soft, liquid voice.

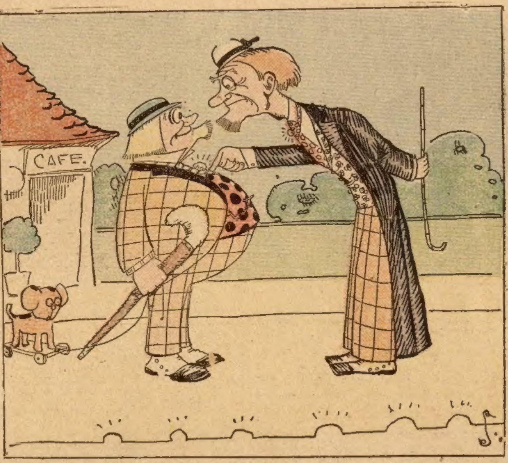
Henpeck—Yes! but it's hard to stop the flow.

Writer's Cramp.

"Pa, what is writer's cramp?"

"It's being cramped for money, my son. All writers suffer from it."

THE VAUDEVILLAINS.



Fritz—Eddie vas vun of der leading lights of his profession.
Louey—Vot is his bizness?
Fritz—He vas an aviator.
Louey—Oh, I see; a sky-light.

A Well-Enacted Part.

"And can't he act at all?" demanded Hi Tragedy.

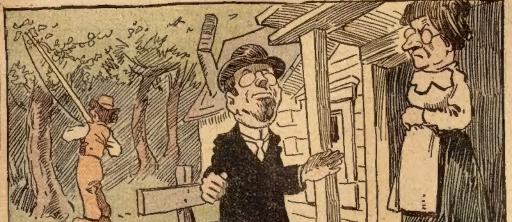
"Well, upon occasions he can," replied Lowe Comedy. "For instance, only today I saw him getting next to some free lunch and he acted for all the world as if he was starved to death."

Oh, Positively Insulting.

Mr. Cholly Shallowpate—I say, did you—er—er—see me at the er—er—horse show?

Miss Cutting Hintz—No, I was too busy watching the horses to get around to the donkey exhibit.

FROM THE CITY.



Mrs. Blobbs—Does your hired man make many mistakes?
Blobbs—Does he? Why, he was just asking where to find the milkweed to feed the cows with.

One of the Evidences.

Hector—That's certainly a smart-looking dog of yours; but I wouldn't own one that was timid. Just see how he keeps out of my way.

Kildersleeve—That's one of the evidences of his smartness.

Faith and Works.

Earlie—What would you do if you was out in the deep water and a great big shark was comin' right at you?

Willie—I'd do a short prayer and then I'd swim like the old scratch.

His Failure.

Ashley—Parrys made a bad financial failure last week

Seymour—How bad?

Ashley—A million or more was involved—he failed to negotiate successfully for the rich Miss Doubloon's hand.

Cheap Wireless.

"Got a wireless message from my son in California yesterday."

"Clear from the Pacific coast. Wonderful! Must have cost a lot."

"Only a cent. He used a postal."

Point of View.

Howell—A girl insulted me today by asking me what I paid for my clothes.

Powell—I shouldn't call it insulting; I should call it flattering if she used the word "pay."

What a Slap.

He—Won't you try and convince your father that ours would be a good match?

She—I'll try, dear, but I can't think of any good argument myself.

An Artful Dodger.

Stroker—They say old Skinnem has untold wealth.

Tax Assessor—I suspected as much.

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Lords of the Ax;

Or, WHO WAS NAPOLEON KNIGHT?

By WILLIAM H. MANNING

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CHAPTER XII.

PLOT OF AN ENEMY.

NAPOLEON KNIGHT faced the lawyer with perfect steadiness.

"Mr. Nettleton," he replied, "I understand you to question my veracity. In a way, your age makes this safe, but if you will send a man of my own years over from Liberty claim to back up your insinuation I shall be pleased to meet him."

Nettleton surveyed the speaker and gained a trifle of fresh respect for him. Himself a man of courage, he could appreciate the quality in others. Still, he did not waver in his attack.

"As I look at it, a challenged reputation for veracity can best be cleared by presenting proof——"

"Sometimes, sir," interrupted Knight, "there is powerful logic in the fists of an innocent man!"

"We will pass the matter by, Mr. Knight. Once more, however, I ask where that Indian is who brought these papers?"

"Once more, sir, I say that he went his way. The papers are yours, or your client's, and if you want the man who brought them to Scarlock, I would suggest that you look for him"

"Do you wish to rest under suspicion?" demanded Nettleton sharply.

"I will match my reputation against that of the Liberty outfit!"

"Counter intimation will not clear you—"

"Sir, I have heard enough of this. You mentioned foul play. Of what do you accuse me?"

The lawyer hesitated. He had found a more alert foreman than he expected, and he was keenly disappointed that he was succeeding so poorly. Now, two things moved and influenced him—an innate disposition to be just, and the cunning of a trained cross-examiner to adopt a new course when a former one failed him.

"Mr. Knight," he responded, "if I wrong you, I heartily beg your pardon, but this matter is of importance to us. If you can help us to find that Indian, we shall be greatly indebted to you."

"I can take you to the very spot where I last saw him, and show you the direction in which he went. Further than that, nothing can be done except to run him down."

Nettleton meditated; then, without announcing a decision, added:

"Will you state just what the man said, and give any minor particulars that occur to you?"

During this interview Napoleon had resisted a desire to retort on his companion by reference to the strange affairs at Liberty. This was due to the fact that, angered by the attack upon his veracity, he had determined to press his suspicions against Anderson and Wolfe by calling in officers, and he would not alarm the plotters prematurely.

His heart did not bound with friendship for Nettleton when the latter changed his methods, but he was willing to accommodate in the one respect mentioned. He was in the midst of the story when a tall man trotted to his side, unnoticed until he was fully there, and succinctly remarked:

"Me want papers!"

Napoleon looked—the Indian was again there. The foreman smiled grimly.

"What papers?" he asked.

"Papers I gave you—they in red 'kerchief."

"Why do you want them?"

"You wrong man—belong 'nother man!"

The redman's manner was quiet, but he was a fellow with rich blood in his veins—that was plain to one who surveyed his stubborn, barbarian-like face—and it was an obvious fact that it was safer to humor than to oppose him.

"One word!" replied Knight. "Tell my friend here where you got those papers, just as you lately told me, and you shall have your wishes gratified."

The Indian turned his big, fierce eyes upon Mr. Nettleton, and that servant of the law fell back a pace. The redman explained.

"Me go on journey—heap walk! Why I go, that my business! Back by Red-pick Butte I meet white miner. He give me red 'kerchief and say talking-papers in it. He say, 'Your way that way, my way t'other way; you take this to Sherwood, at Scarlock.' Plenty good—I bring it; I give it to you. I go one, three mile, stop in camp, meet man, find I give it to wrong man here. I come back; want right man have it. Why all this talk?"

He wheeled suddenly upon Nettleton.

"You think me lie?" he demanded, and his black brows came together like the clipping jaws of a wolf.

The lawyer leaped back with utter disregard for dignity.

"Not at all!" he exclaimed hastily. "Not at all, my friend; nobody has thought of such a thing, I assure you. We only desire particulars."

"You got partic'lars—now you show me papers darn quick!"

"Mr. Nettleton," interposed Knight urbanely, "the witness is yours!"

Nettleton was a humbled and badly frightened man, for he believed he could see two centuries of massacre in the face of this son of the aborigines, but his latent courage came to his aid a trifle and he hoped that no new massacre need occur. Meekly asserting that he would show the Indian the documents and satisfy him that they were, at last, in the right hands, he questioned him further. At the end of ten minutes there had been more words, but, really, no further particulars.

The Indian could not tell who the man was that had given him the parcel, nor where he had gone, nor where he had obtained the red handkerchief and its contents.

Once more the redman grew imperious, and Nettleton took him away to visit Liberty and see the papers, though it was manifest that the lawyer went with quivers in his knees, and it is doubtful if he had ever before tried so hard to be agreeable of manner. Those barbarian eyes were very impressive, and even his stout courage had its limitations.

Sandy MacBree stepped from the cover of a building, smiling broadly.

"I've been listening!" he announced. "Say, Knight, you put it all over that cold-blooded lawyer. Ha, ha! As father would say, you've got the sheep and the wool, and Nettleton can have the rest."

"Unless the Indian takes his scalp!" added, Napoleon, clapping his hands.

"What were those papers, anyhow?"

"I am not clear as to that; I didn't examine them as closely as I wish I had. There were two or three sheets of memoranda as to the Liberty property, but the main thing was a letter written by Lawyer Nettleton to Asa Sherwood."

"Why should he write to Sherwood?"

"Oh! the letter was an old one. I noticed the date, but don't remember it. It was some weeks back. Moreover, it was, it seems, the letter that was written to Sherwood to announce to him that, as old Zeke Dalton was dead and had left no will, he—Sherwood—was sole heir; so he was summoned to come to Scarlock and take possession of his new estate."

"The dickens you say!" quoth Sandy. "Why has such a letter been drifting about the country, carried by a miner and by a redskin?"

"That's the conundrum."

"Was it lost by Sherwood on his way here, and found by the miner, and——"

"Quite likely! But, Sandy, my boy, the affairs of Asa Sherwood don't interest me a bit! He can go to Halifax, unless——"

Napoleon stopped, meditated, and then slowly added:

"If Sherwood was a decent fellow, and if he came to Liberty in good faith, and had to stay in his room with weak eyes, and then was murdered by Nate Wolfe and Anderson, and if Anderson has stolen his name and property—why, that's different! But we will see!"

"Knight, do you think there has been murder done over there?"

"I'm too busy to think on that point, but it may be that, later on, the Law—big 'L,' Sandy—will ask Wolfe, Anderson & Co. in trumpet tones, 'Where is the weak-eyed man?'"

"It seems there certainly was such a man."

"Dead certain, Sandy!"

With this response Knight turned away, saddled a horse and rode north until he reached the fence that divided Ben Nord from Liberty claim. At that point he paused and looked up and down Scarlock. He was always on the alert to protect MacBree's property from the depredations of the rival lord of the ax, and that meant that he was unceasingly vigilant. Believing that the best way to save Ben Nord from the calamity of treacherous strokes was to foresee and prevent them, he watched over the property to such an extent that one enthusiastic admirer among his men had asserted that he even knew just how many limbs grew on every tree.

His present errand was to ride the bounds, and he soon resumed his progress, advancing up the mountain slowly and systematically.

He found the fence intact, and no evidence that a blow from the rival faction was impending.

When he reached the point where the open land met the timber he paused, half turned his horse and surveyed the territory open to his view. The fence ran thread-like down the slope, with fields and growing crops and flocks and herds on either side. The MacBree and Sherwood buildings were alike visible. Sitting in his saddle, a solitary figure of the space, he gave heed to each detail. Egotism had no part in his make-up. Had it been otherwise, he might have soliloquized:

"I am master of Ben Nord! I hold all things here in the hollow of my hand! Acting as foreman, I give attention to the great and the small; I know my charge in its entirety and in its details. I came to this claim a stranger, but I have conquered my world of activity. I am a Napoleon!"

The foreman was a man of practical mind, and not given to day-dreaming or empty sentiment. He did not think of his personal success, but of making business success permanent; nor of renown, but of making domination absolute.

Presently he fell to observing Liberty more closely. He noted the prosperity that prevailed there—the bright green of the grassy field, the sturdy nature of the crops, and the fact that the cattle and sheep were plump and sleek. Bitterness stirred within him; he resented the fact that Liberty was flourishing. The whole place was an eyesore to him. If——"

Suddenly he recalled the argument of Doctor Mason; the plea that he should restrain himself from doing damage to the property across the divisional fence. Mason's influence was strong with him, and his mood changed.

"The doctor is right," he muttered. "I must keep myself in check. Liberty claim has its rights. I can see that without obeying Mason's request that I imagine myself in Sherwood's place. In Sherwood's place! Humph!"

He laughed at what he regarded as the absurdity of the idea, and, speaking to his horse, resumed his way.

When he reached the mansion, on his return, he found a letter that had been brought over from Liberty. It proved to be from Lawyer Nettleton, and was an apology for having spoken as he did. The writer did not humble himself unduly, but he supplemented his regrets with the expression of a hope that the two outfits would always live in harmony.

Knight read with great indifference. Alert as he was, he felt himself able to defy his rivals and hold his own against all attacks.

Human wisdom has its limitations, and it so happened that all of the opposition to the foreman was not on the other side of the line-fence. At that moment Miss Janie MacBree was sitting in her private room, her copy of Shakespeare before her, and her finger on a passage that she had dwelt upon for some minutes. It read: "But screw your courage to the sticking-place, and we'll not fail!"

The scholarly lady leaned back and considered.

"Shall it be done?" she soliloquized. "'Conscience doth make cowards of us all,' and I am too forgiving. Mr. Blakell says so. Why should I be so? I am humiliated by this foreman, this hired man who seeks to rule or ruin. 'He doth bestride the narrow world like a colossus!' Shall he shame and crush me—'I am native here, and to the manner born!' If law and lawyers will not help me, I will help myself. ''Tis deeds must win the prize!'"

She lifted Shakespeare in both hands, planted her elbows on the table and leaned her forehead against the volume.

"Sibyl has a large sum of money now!" she mused. "This girl—this forward sister—this housekeeper who was preferred by our father for the office rather than myself—is careless of her cash. Soon, very soon, she will miss a large part of it. Search will be made. It will be found in the room of this foreman; he will be accused of theft, and even Sibyl will then be convinced of his unworthiness. It shall be done—I will drive Napoleon Knight from Ben Nord, humiliated, disgraced, a branded thief!"

CHAPTER XIII.

A PECULIAR HORSE-TRADER.

The following day three horsemen came through the timber-belt at the foot of Scarlock. As they neared the Ben Nord the leader drew rein.

"This will be a good place for you to stop," he remarked. "You can go into camp and make yourselves comfortable. Try to avoid being seen by anybody, but if they do discover you, claim to be ordinary travelers. Don't admit that you have any interest in Ben Nord."

"All right, Martin," answered a second man. "I, for one, am a capital hand at resting."

"The quieter you are, the better. I should have some system of signaling, but I don't know how I can do it. Wait—you see that tall tree to the south of MacBree's house—the one where the horse is standing?"

"Yes."

"Watch it! If you see a bit of white cloth hung from the limb it will mean, 'He proves to be our man!' But, of course, the white cloth can only be there in case I find a reasonable excuse for suspending my handkerchief there. Why I want to do that is this: He may seek to leave the mountain. If he does, after the signal is up, stop him."

"We will."

"How shall you operate, Martin?" inquired the third man.

"Oh! you see I am a horse-buyer, and want to get fine animals for somebody or other. Want to see the foreman in person about it. That will enable me to mix right in with Knight."

"You'll do things all right, old boy! Trust you for that!"

"Be that as it may, I'm off. Remember, it is my plan to come back, after which we will go up and arrest him, but I may send a messenger. I can't tell. So-long!"

Mr. Martin rode away. After going a few rods he clapped a hand to his right breast. It pressed upon something that rattled a bit, and he should have been sure of his position, but the disposition to "make assurance doubly certain" pressed upon him, and he halted, thrust the hand into a pocket and drew out that which had rattled. It was a paper, folded so that it was long and narrow. He spread it out. It was chiefly printed, but certain blanks had been filled in with pen and ink.

First of all were big letters in Old English type, forming the name of the State and county, with some minor things. Below was matter which he read in an undertone:

"'To the Sheriff, Deputy Sheriff, or any duly-accredited officer of said county before whom these presents shall come, greeting: Know you that whereas one Belden Knapp has been charged before me, Peter Swan, a justice of the peace for said county, with the crime of murder, you are hereby authorized and commanded to seize the person of said Belden Knapp, wherever he may be found, and him convey'—and so forth!"

Mr. Martin broke off, refolded the warrant and thrust it into his pocket. Softly singing an epidemic love-ditty he rode up Scarlock and soon reached Ben Nord mansion. He accosted a laborer there.

"I would like to see Mr. MacBree," he stated.

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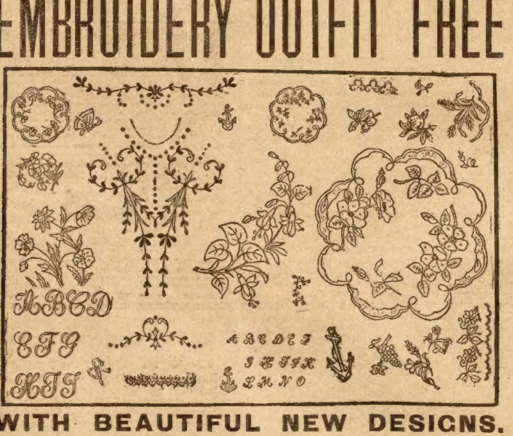

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"He is sick abed, and unconscious," was the reply.

"That so?" responded Martin. "Well, I don't know him, but I'm sorry for anybody that's sick. I'm here on business, though. Is your foreman hereabouts?"

"Yes. Mr. Knight is over yonder. Shall I call him?"

"If you please. Sorry I can't see the boss, but—all right!"

The foreman w[illegible] called, [illegible]nd he came.

"My name," [illegible]id Martin, "is Clark—Charley Clark of Singer Station. I do something in the hors[illegible] line. Last week I was talking with old Tom Cartwright of Three-O ranch, and he said he would want horses in early fall. I was coming this way, and, knowing of the Ben Nord, I told him I would stop and see what you had here."

"We have A1 horses for all uses," replied Napoleon. "We can fit you out with saddle or draught animals, though no trade can be closed until Mr. MacBree recovers."

"That's all right. I am going south and couldn't take them now; besides which, I must report to Tom before closing. If you have got what we want, all right."

"Come and see for yourself."

"I will. Fine weather we are having, but [illegible] are having running [illegible]

[illegible]

Napoleon looked at the summit of the mountain where the trees stood tall and sightly. He was thinking what the application of a torch up that way would do.

He led the so-called Mr. Clark to where the horses wer[illegible] nd the alle[illegible] [illegible]red [illegible] the matter ze[illegible] [illegible] knew something [illegible] the equine race, and talked learnedly [illegible] their good and bad points. Knight thought him garrulous, but saw no mischief in him. [illegible] commended the MacBree collection [illegible], and examined their teeth and legs [illegible] a miser handles his gold. [illegible] "Reckon you [illegible]

Napoleon w[illegible] erty in question, but a sense of honor prevented.

"I think they have a good drove," he [illegible] mitted.

"Do you happen to be going over that way?"

Knight shrugged hi[illegible]

"No!" he replied bri[illegible]

Mr. Martin scarcely heard the [illegible] Something else, however, had suddenly [illegible] his eyes to sparkling—it was the foren[illegible] shoulder-shrug! In his case, too, good luck came in pairs. Knight took off his hat and ran his fingers through the thick hair on the crown of his head. Mr. Martin's [illegible] got to be ferrets; they glued [illegible] to that head, but not to [illegible] stead, he gazed at a poi[illegible] poleon's left ear, and he saw [illegible] the hair was rumpled. More, under [illegible] he saw a reddish place—what wa[illegible] the wound that had cost Napoleon so much.

"Done!" cried Mr. Martin.

"Eh?" questioned the foreman.

"I mean," explained the horse-trader, "that I reckon I can fill all my needs here. I like these ho[illegible]"

He faced away from the drove and seemed to be ready to return, so Knight took him back to the mansion.

"Supper will be ready in two hours," said the foreman. "Stay and eat with us."

"I can't do it!" replied Martin. "I've got business ahead of [illegible]"

"Well, have a bite," urged Napoleon. "That will take but five minutes. I'll see a servant, at once."

"If you say so, all right."

Knight entered the house. Mr. Martin dipped his handkerchief in [illegible] trough of water, washed it a trifle, and then pla[illegible]ed it on the limb of a tall tree in such a w[illegible]y that it hung like a flag. When Napoleon reappeared the trader was near the doo[illegible]

"The lunch will soon be rea[illegible]" announced the foreman.

"All right. Great place MacBree has got here! If I was not in such a hurry I should like to stay and see it more, but business presses upon me. By the way, I notice you carry a revolver. Suppose we try our luck while we wait? That tree will make a fi[illegible]e target."

"All right."

Napoleon felt no interest in the suggestion, but, as representative of Mr. MacBree, he had to entertain the visitor. They fired several times at the tree, and then the trader set up a board several yards farther [illegible]

"That will try our mettle!" he rema[illegible]ked.

It tried his, and found it wanting. He fired five times and, as the distance was excessive, missed every shot.

"Now, you!" he directed, smiling.

Knight took position, fired five times and plumped five bullets into the board so near together that a hand would have covered all five perforations. Mr. Martin gazed with expanded eyes and open mouth.

"The blazes!" he exclaimed.

"Not much of a feat!" said Napoleon, smiling.

Martin turned his gaze from the [illegible] of perforations to the scar above Knight's ear.

"[illegible]m everlastingly beat!" he declared. "Shoot me if I ain't!"

"Well, I suppose I must admit that you are beaten," responded the foreman lightly, "but you go down with credit. You handle your own gun well. Look at the tree! You made a bull's-eye!"

"I'll be hanged if I know whether I did or not!"

The remark w[illegible]s obscure, but the announcement by a [illegible]nt that the trader lunch was ready interrupted con[illegible]rsation. Mr. Martin at[illegible] sitting on the piaz[illegible] his appetite did not seem keen, and [illegible] high spirits had vanished. From an over[illegible] talkative man he had become taciturn and uncertain. Presently he stirred suddenly.

"I'm a bit hard of hearing in th[illegible]" he remarked. "Had you just as soon I'd [illegible] on your other hand?"

"Certainly," ansv[illegible]ed Napoleon, and changed his own po[illegible]tion accordingly. Th[illegible] brought his left side to the trader, and the latter again looked hard at the bravely-visible scar in his companion's hair. He gazed long, but did not seem to get any satisfaction out of it.

When he had finished he mounted and ro[illegible] away down the slope. After he was [illegible] Knight noticed a white fabric swa[illegible]ing [illegible] the tree. It was Mr. Martin's [illegible] [illegible]. He had forgotten it, and [illegible] drying it swung feebly and looked as dismal as a marooned sailor.

CHAPTER XIV.

FINDS SOMETHING.

Janie MacBree softly opened the door of Knight's room, looked within, hesitated, and then entered. Going quickly to the closet she found garments belonging to the foreman hanging on the wall-hooks. Swinging a coat around she slid something into the pocket, turned, and took the first step toward leaving the room.

Then she stopped short. Before her towered Sandy, his round, blond[illegible] face strangely sober. He blocked her w[illegible]

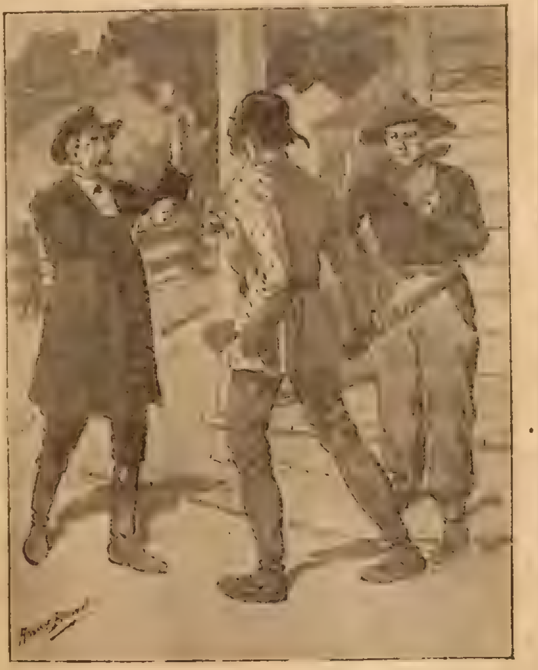
"Janie, what are you doin[illegible]" [illegible] the boy, his voice shaking [illegible]

The Shakespearian lady wavered a bit, but her answer was not long delayed.

"I am seeing if the servants have dusted properly," she replied.

"What were you doing with Napoleon's [illegible]"

"[illegible]s coat? Boy, you are impertinent! Why should I do anything with his coat? I am not interested in this hired man of our father's—this 'Daniel come to judgment!'" and Janie frowned deeply upon her brother.



"You think me lie!"

"Where," he went on, h's manner like that of one suddenly grown old, "is the thing you took from Sibyl's [illegible]"

She lost color noticeabl[illegible]

"Sandy!" [illegible]

[illegible] nb- [illegible]et and take [illegible]u went to [illegible], and you no longer have the [illegible]

"[illegible] you gone daft? Has your brain [illegible] All this is your imagination! You—you are ill!"

[illegible]he found words that were brave enough, but her voice shook and her manner was not convincing. Sandy moved rapidly to the closet and himself ran a hand into the pocket of the coat. He brought it out with a small parcel that had appearance not to [illegible]

"[illegible] money!" he whispered; "th[illegible] money! Oh! Janie, would you make [illegible] poleon out a thief? No, no!—don't deny it! I saw you take this from Sibyl's casket, [illegible] I saw you bring it here. Chance made me see your first step; I saw the r[illegible] because I followed you here. Janie, [illegible] you to do this—and you a MacBree!"

He broke into tearless sobs, and her pale face grew whiter. She gazed at him as if at a ghost. He was no longer a mere sunny boy; he seemed to hav[illegible] to manhood, and he stood an ac[illegible] was all the more impressiv[illegible] accused in sorrow. And his [illegible] most overpow[illegible] MacBrees flowed [illegible]ship [illegible] h[illegible] And the MacBrees [illegible]

[illegible] rules Ben Nord where I should [illegible]

[illegible]ed her face with new [illegible] mind.

[illegible] "did Carlos Blakell [illegible]

[illegible] Am I not capable of d[illegible] This foreman—this hi[illegible]ed man—yes, and you and Sibyl! [illegible]ther is sick, and I should be sole ruler here. How is it? I am put down, debased, subordinated to my youngers! 'Oh! what a noble mind is here o'erthrown'!" she quoted tragicall[illegible]

"And was it because you could not have full power here that you did this? And do you know what—I say, do you know what you have done? I'm no lawyer, but I know you have made yourself liable by trying to show Knight as a thief. Oh! Janie, oh, sister!"

"The law!" she muttered.

"Yes, the law! You can't cast such blame on [illegible] person and go clear. Now, Janie, we can't stand here any longer and talk. You have done a terrible thing, but you are my sister. I am going to shield you. Nobody but you and me shall ever know of this. I will return the money where it belongs, and that will end it if—mark you this, Janie—if you let Knight alone. He's a loyal friend of our family, and I'll stand by him to the end. Understand, Janie? Now, will you promise to drop your war on him?"

Sandy was no long[illegible]r ruled by his sorrow that she should fall fro[illegible] honor. The stern[illegible]er [illegible] of his MacBree ancestry spoke, and she was reminded of her father in his severer moments. Mixed with dull wonder that he whom she regarded as a child should suddenly appear as a man, was the consciousness that she was defeated, and that her one hope was to yield, and yield at on[illegible]

It was not done with good grace, but she gave the de[illegible]ed pledge, and then they parted. Sandy returned the money to its proper place, and, fortunately, without being seen; and then he crowded the secret of her guilt into the depths of his big heart and turned the key upon it. He only hoped that her own hand would not loose the demon again.

Two hours later Napoleon Knight entered the room. His work was done, bedtime was near, and he expected to sleep the night out quietly. There was nothing to tell that Janie and Sandy had been [illegible]

[illegible]ting himself, he read a newspaper for a considerable time, and derived some pleasure from it, but the sheet was an inferior San Francisco weekly and had no news of the section around Searlock. In the peace of these moments he did not suspect that an interloper had so lately been in his room, nor what he had escaped so narrowly, nor yet the part his coat had had in the march of events. It was, however, the will of destiny that another coat should figure in the march, and strangely.

Some hours before a business letter had come to Mr. MacBree. It had been opened by Sandy, and then given to Napoleon for [illegible]ation. [illegible]r still, the foreman had slipped it into his left-hand breast pocket. Now, wishing to consult it again, he thrust his hand into his opposite pocket under the belief that it was there.

[illegible]ot finding it readily he searched more persistently, and his fingers touched a paper. He drew it out. It was not the letter.

He held a sheet of writing-paper that looked strange to him. It was soiled and [illegible] as if from long carrying. Idly un[illegible] it he saw the words written upon one side, and he read them slowly. He read, and then his indifference vanished. [illegible] gazed at the paper in bewilderment. [illegible]gain he read the words:

"Memo: Learn to know every foot of Liberty claim, especially the timber-land. [illegible] for precisely what they are; no sharp practices. Pay my men promptly and use them well. Settle all bills at once. For cattle, sheep, etc., get high-grade ani[illegible]. Test my fancy for Morgan blood in [illegible] Aim to raise the standard of Lib[illegible]

Knight grew more bewildered each instant.

"What have I got here?" he muttered.

He turned the sheet and scanned it from different points of view.

"This memorandum," he pursued, "this outline for operations at Liberty—why, it is just such a jotting down of ideas as the owner of Liberty might put on paper!"

Another turn of the sheet.

"It is chafed and soiled as if it had long been in my pocket. Yes, and it has been jammed down into a corner of the pocket, [illegible]

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CHAPTER I

SANDY.

ONE fine afternoon in June an automobile drew up in front of a blacksmith shop standing in the outskirts of the village of Milburn, in central New York, and the driver leaped to the ground and called out, sharply.

"Hey, blacksmith! Come out here."

A moment later a handsome, bronzed youth, dressed only in overalls and shirt—the latter with the front open, and the sleeves rolled up to the elbows, showing wonderfully-developed chest and forearms stepped forth and advanced and faced the man.

"What is wanted, sir?" he asked, respectfully.

"I want the blacksmith," was the curt reply, with a somewhat supercilious glance at the youthful face of the other.

"He is home, sick, sir; but I'm his helper. Perhaps I may do as well."

The other shrugged his shoulders.

"I doubt it," he said. "What do you know about motor cars?

"Not as much as the man that invented them, sir, perhaps," was the quiet reply, "but something."

The man laughed harshly.

"Humph!" he grunted. "Then look at this car and tell me what the matter is."

"What seems to be the matter?" queried the young blacksmith. "In what way has it been bothering you?"

"It balks."

"Balks, you say?" in some surprise.

"Yes; it goes along for a mile or so, all right, smooth as silk, and then suddenly and without warning it goes sulky, grinds, grumbles, slackens speed, and then stops dead."

The youth stood there, looking thoughtfully at the motor car, which was a fine one indeed.

"Well?" growled the motorist. "Are you going to try to find out what ails the thing?

Sure!" was the reply. "I was just trying to think out what would most likely be the trouble. You know, sir, that if you have a hard problem to work, it is better to sit down and think out the way to do it, rather than to jump at it blindly, and begin figuring at random."

The man looked at the young blacksmith in some surprise. He had not expected to hear any such talk from the lips of a grimy pounder of red-hot iron.

"I know," he said, slowly; "I believe it was Davy Crockett that said, 'Be sure you're right, then go ahead.'"

"Yes, and that applies to a thing like this, also. Let me see, I think I know what would be most likely to cause such actions as you say the machine has been showing. I'll soon see if I am right."

He turned and re-entered the shop, but returned quickly, bringing a screw-driver and a small hammer. Throwing himself down on his stomach beside the motor car, he crawled under it, and then turned over on his back.

There was a brief interval of silence, and then the man heard the tap-tap-tap of the hammer, followed soon afterward by a rasping sound.

There was a quizzical, half-skeptical look on the motorist's face, as much as to say that he did not think the youth would be able to find out what the trouble was.

Perhaps a minute passed, and then the boy blacksmith came wriggling out from under the body of the car.

"Did you locate the trouble?" asked the man.

"I think so, sir."

"Humph! I have my doubts."

"I'm sure that you won't be bothered any more, the way you speak of, sir."

The man looked at his watch.

"I can't afford to be bothered any more, that way," he said. "You see, I'm engaged in a race across the country, from New York to San Francisco, and I have already lost more than an hour. I don't want to be delayed any more."

"The machine won't balk again, I am sure of that."

"I hope that you know what you are talking about. What is your charge, boy?"

"Fifty cents."

The man drew a half-dollar from his pocket and handed it to the boy blacksmith.

Then he turned to enter his car, but at this moment another automobile came round a bend in the road a quarter of a mile away. This machine was evidently out of fix, too, for it came hissing along at a slow pace.

An exclamation of dismay escaped the lips of the man, and he climbed hastily into the seat. As he did so, a wild yell came from the driver of the approaching machine.

"Stop that man!" came to the young blacksmith's ears. "Stop him, I say!"

The youth hesitated an instant. He did not know whether to try to do as told, or not. He did not know whether he would be justified, for the newcomer was a total stranger, the same as this man. He decided, however, to obey, and leaping forward, he seized hold of the man's arm, just as he was about to crank the machine and get under way.

"Wait!" cried the youth.

"Let go!" snarled the man, and he tried to wrench his arm loose from the other's hold.

But he was unsuccessful, even though a powerful man; the youth held on tight.

"Let go, I say!" the man almost yelled, and he whirled and grabbed the other by the wrist and tried to tear his grip loose.

The youth retained his hold, however, in spite of the other's efforts to get his hand released.

"Wait," said the boy blacksmith. "Let's see what the other man has to say."

With a snarl the man drew a revolver and tried to level it at the youth, but before he could do so, he found himself jerked out of the automobile without ceremony. Down he came to his knees on the ground, the revolver striking against the side of the car and falling from his hand.

A yell of delight went up from the man in the other motor car.

"Hold him!" he cried. "Don't let him get away! He's a burglar, and escaped from me while we were on our way to Sing Sing. Hold him! I'll reward you."

The man leaped to his feet, and with a snarl of rage, struck out at the youth with all his might, at the same time growling out.

"Let go, you fool! Let go, or I'll kill you!"

The boy evaded the blow, however, and held on all the more tightly.

Then the man seized hold of the youth and tried to throw him down, thinking, doubtless, that when he had done this, he would be able to get loose.

But he found that he was unequal to the task. The boy was a wonder, muscularly, and turned the tables on his antagonist by throwing him to the ground with considerable force.

"Now, stay there!" he cried, holding the man in spite of his desperate struggles.

At this moment the other automobile came to a stop near-by, with a hiss and a chug, and the driver leaped out and came running up.

"That's it! Good boy!" he cried. "You are certainly a boy of muscle, for Zack Bagley is about as powerful a ruffian as you would find in a day's search."

"I can hold him, all right," was the boy's reply.

"So I see; can you turn him over on his face?"

"Yes."

The boy proved his ability to do this, by doing it.

"There! That's the ticket. Now I'll have the bracelets on his wrists in a jiffy."

The man drew something from his pocket, and there was a jingling sound, followed by a couple of clicks, and then he said.

"It's all right; you may let him up."

The youth rose to his feet, and as he did so a boy came running up, his eyes almost bulging out, he was so excited.

"What's de matter, Sandy?" he cried. "Who is de feller, ennyhow, an' what's he done?"

The handcuffed man rose to a sitting posture and glared at the youth viciously.

"I'll remember you for this!" he hissed. "I'll get square with you, as sure as my name is Zack Bagley!"

The youth had turned toward the boy, however, and paid no attention to the prisoner's threat.

"He's a burglar, Tommy," he replied.

"A burglar, hey? Say, but ye done fine a-ketchin' uv him, Sandy!"

The man who had applied the handcuffs to the burglar looked at the young blacksmith with interest. He noted the magnificent arms, shoulders and chest, and then said:

"What is your other name, my boy?"

"Hardin, sir."

"Well, Sandy, I am much obliged to you for helping me. It was a good piece of work on your part."

"He'll never do any more such work, if I get a chance at him again!" growled the prisoner. "Zack Bagley never forgets a good turn or forgives a bad one!"

"I guess you are not frightened very much, are you?" queried the officer—for such the man was, who had captured the burglar.

Sandy smiled and shook his head.

"I can't say that I am very badly scared," he said.

"Ye're right he hain't!" grinned the little chap, who was evidently a great admirer of Sandy. "He hain't afeerd uv nothin', Sandy hain't!"

CHAPTER II.

HELPING THE SHERIFF.

The officer looked at Sandy thoughtfully, for a few moments, and then asked:

"Is this your shop?"

The youth shook his head.

"No," he said; "it belongs to Hank Wilkins. I work for him."

"Have you parents here?"

"No, I am an orphan."

"You have relatives, though?"

"No, none that I know of."

"My name is Jim Holt; I am sheriff of Ulster County. I was taking this fellow to Sing Sing, but at Kingston he managed to slip the handcuffs and make a run for it. An automobile was standing in front of a store; he leaped into it and dashed away. I secured another automobile and went in pursuit. He led me a merry chase, for two days and nights. I had trouble in keeping on his track, but managed to do so, and overtook him here, as you know. But now, I don't see how I am going to get these machines both back to Kingston, alone. I can't do it, in fact. I will have to have help; could you run one of them back for me? Do you know how to handle a motor car?"

"Yes, sir; but—Hank Wilkins is sick, and I hate to go away and leave him in the lurch."

"There isn't much doing, in your line, is there?"

"Not just now, sir. But——"

"Go and see your employer and ask him to let you off for a few days."

Sandy was silent and thoughtful a few moments, and then he said:

"I have been intending to go to New York, and have been saving up my wages for that purpose. Perhaps it is as good a time to go as any. I don't want to be a blacksmith all my life."

"I am going to get you a reward of fifty dollars for catching Bagley, here, for me," said the sheriff, "and the owner of this automobile that the man got away with will give you a reward for bringing it back to him, likely, so that will help you on your way to the city."

"I will see Hank," said Sandy; "and tell him that I am going away."

"Where does he live?"

"Over in the village."

"Well, I shall be very glad to have you go. But first, see if you can fix up my machine. There's something the matter with it."

"How does it act?"

The sheriff explained, and Sandy went and examined the machine, and then got some tools and crawled under the car and worked for perhaps ten minutes. Then he came forth and said:

"I guess she'll go all right now."

"Good! I hope that you are right about it."

A roughly-dressed fellow was standing, leaning against the side of the blacksmith shop. He had a thin face, sharp nose and keen ferrety eyes, but he acted in a very listless manner, as if mildly curious, as is the case with some people under such circumstances. Had the sheriff or Sandy watched him closely, however, they would have seen him exchange meaning glances with the prisoner, into whose eyes had leaped a look of recognition the moment the fellow had appeared.

Sandy helped the sheriff get the prisoner into the tonneau of the machine, and then Holt tied the prisoner's ankles together.

"Now you won't jump out, I guess, Zack," he said, grimly.

"I'll get even with you, Holt, some day, just as sure as the sun rises in the east!" was the growling reply.

"Oh, you mustn't bear an officer ill will because he tries to do his duty, Bagley," said Holt, good-naturedly.

"That's all right! And as for you, you young hound!" to Sandy; "I'll fix you, some time, see if I don't!"

"All right," cheerfully; "forewarned is forearmed, you know."

"Bah!"

The roughly-dressed fellow who had been leaning against the side of the shop now turned and strolled away in the direction of the village.

Sandy went to the shop and closed the door and fastened it with a padlock, and then walked toward the automobile that the prisoner had come there in.

Tommy followed him, and asked, eagerly.

"Say, Sandy, kin I ride with ye?"

"Sure, Tommy," was the reply. "Hop in."

The boy did so, quickly, and then Sandy followed and looked inquiringly at the sheriff.

"Are you ready?" he asked.

"Yes; you take the lead, as you know where your employer lives, and I don't."

"All right, sir."

Sandy started the motor car, and moved down the road, the other car following closely. Across the rustic bridge they went and into the edge of the village, and on through the one little street, past the stores. Sandy seemed to be known to everybody, for when they saw him driving one of the cars, the people yelled questions at him, rapidly:

"Where ye goin', Sandy?"

"Whose automobile is thet?"

"Git outer thar, Tommy Hope!" this last from Tommy's mother, who happened to be coming out of a store and caught sight of him.

But he only grinned and waved his hand.

"I'll see ye later, ma," he said.

On went the motor cars and suddenly one of the natives of the village noticed that the fellow seated in the tonneau of the rear car was bound [illegible] a shout, and called the attention of to the matter.

ty thar!" he yelled. "Thar's er fel- trussed up like er chicken whut is ok ter market! I wonder whut ther is, ennyhow?"

re was considerable excitement at but the automobiles were quickly out ch, and so the natives had to get with their curiosity unsatisfied.

k Wilkins' house was over at the far- ide of the village, and Sandy brought r to a stop in front of the building, aped out and entered.

was gone nearly half an hour, and he came forth, carrying a grip, in evidently, were his belongings. he reached the side of the car, the said:

u have decided to go, eh?"

s; Mr. Wilkins knew that I have been ng of leaving, and he said it is all that I might as well go now as any

od! I'm glad that you are to drive itomobile to Kingston, my boy."

' ye're goin' away, sure enuff, Sandy?" d Tommy, his lip quivering.

s, Tommy."

t—ye'll come back some time?"

, yes, some time, Tommy."

y, I hate ter see ye go!"

ell, I hate to go, Tommy; but I had ago made up my mind not to stay here longer, and so this is as good a e to go as I will have, and I am going e advantage of it."

y, let me ride out inter ther country ys, Sandy!" eagerly.

l right; but it won't be much fun for when it comes to walking back."

, I'll only go two er three miles."

l right." Then Sandy got into the car, oked inquiringly at the sheriff.

all we go, now?" he asked.

s, if you're ready."

all ready, sir."

od! I'll take the lead, and you may on behind."

started the machine, moved out d the car Sandy was in, and then on up the road. Sandy started his and as he did so, a woman who had to the door of the house, waved her and called out:

od-by, Sandy, an' good luck!"

od-by, Mrs. Wilkins," called back ; "and thank you."

n they rounded a bend and were out ht of the village.

nmy was delighted to be riding in an nobile, but his delight was tempered e thought that he was soon to have to with Sandy, perhaps forever.

moved the motor cars at a good pace, when they had gone about three miles, ny said, his voice trembling slightly:

guess I'd better not go enny furder, y."

l right, Tommy," was the reply. "I'll u out. It will be quite a walk back."

don't mind thet, Sandy," with tears in yes; "et's hevin' ter say good-by ter ye ut I hate. Say, ye'll come back some won't ye?" wistfully.

re, Tommy." And then he shook with the little chap, who had leaped ground.

od-by, Tommy," he went on. "Tell ne boys 'Hello' for me, and explain it was that I left in such a hurry and stop to tell them good-by."

l right, Sandy. Good-by!"

n Sandy set the motor car in motion , and put on the speed, in order to ake the other car, which was now a distant. When he came to a bend in oad, he glanced back, and saw Tommy his tattered straw hat. Sandy waved and in return, and then flashed around urve and was out of the little chap's

ell, well!" thought Sandy, as he ed along the road; "had any one told two hours ago, that in less than that I would be speeding along in a motor bound for New York, to seek my for- I would have laughed at them. But the truth, just the same. I wonder it will turn out? Will I find my for- or will I not?"

CHAPTER III.

APTURES ANOTHER BURGLAR.

n evening came, they stopped at a e inn for supper. The prisoner was ucted by the sheriff, and Sandy looked the automobiles and then followed.

er was ready, and as soon as he had d his face and hands and combed his he went into the diningroom and took t at the same table with the sheriff nis prisoner.

k Bagley glared at Sandy fiercely, but nothing, and the youth paid no atten- o the look.

ow did you learn to handle a motor asked the sheriff, with some interest.

ell, you see, we repair quite a good ," replied Sandy; "and I have often n a mile or two with the owners of ines, after we have repaired a ma- , to see that it was working all right; he owners have frequently let me run ar; that is the way I learned."

see. I suppose there isn't much that don't know about a machine."

n pretty well posted, sir."

hat makes it all the better for us."

es, if anything gets out of order with nachines before we get to our destina- I think that I shall be able to fix it , all right."

have no doubt regarding it."

ter a few moments of silence, Sandy

should think it would be better, safer more convenient for you to go to ston on the cars."

would do so," was the reply; "but I have o get the automobile back to Kings-

ire some one to drive it for you."

e sheriff shook his head.

wouldn't know whether or not it got safely. No, I'll drive it back, myself; l take longer to reach my destination, e'll get there in time."

er supper they went out and got in automobiles and set out again.

y rode onward a couple of hours, and stopped for the night at Binghamton.

sheriff engaged a room in the hotel they stopped, and the three went to once. It was a large room, with a e and a single bed.

sheriff and his prisoner slept in the bed and Sandy in the single one.

ay along in the night Sandy was awakened by hearing a noise at the door. He rose on his elbow and listened intently. The noise was a peculiar one—a sort of rasping, scratching sound.

Being unable to make out the cause of the noise, Sandy got out of bed and stole across to the door and listened.

It did not take him long to make out what was going on, now: Some one was trying to pick the lock of the door!

"Somebody is trying to get in here!" thought Sandy. "But why?"

This, of course, was a question that he could not answer.

"Well," he thought; "if he gets in here, I'll try and see to it that he meets with a warm reception."

He tiptoed back to the other side of the room and donned his trousers. Then he returned and stationed himself at one side of the door and waited and listened.

Presently the noise ceased, and then Sandy could see the door coming slowly open. It was pretty dark in the room, but his eyes were accustomed to the darkness, and he could see the door moving.

The moment for action would soon be at hand.

Slowly the door was pushed back, till it was half-open, and then a dark form slipped through the opening, and into the room.

Now was the time!

Sandy realized this, and quick as a flash he threw his arms around the intruder and held him tightly, in spite of his struggles.

The night-prowler made no outcry, of course, for the thing farthest from his wishes was that a disturbance should be raised. Silence was his long suit.

Perhaps he thought that he would be able to break the hold of his assailant, but if such was the case, he made a great mistake, for he could not do so. Sandy's arms were like flexible bars of steel encircling him.

In the struggle, they moved about the room, however, and they bumped against a chair and made noise sufficient to awaken the sheriff, who rose up in bed, quickly, and called out sharply:

"Who's there!"

"It's me—Sandy," replied the youth. "And I've captured a burglar, I guess. Get up and turn on the light and let's see."

There was a thump, as the sheriff's feet struck the floor, and then a fumbling sound, followed by brilliant light, as he found the switch and turned on the electric light.

The instant Jim Holt, the sheriff, caught sight of the face of the man Sandy was holding, an exclamation escaped his lips:

"It's 'Keen Ralph!'" he cried. "Jove, Sandy, you have made a valuable capture! This fellow is a burglar, and unless I am mightily mistaken, he is an old pal of Bagley, here." He turned to the burglar in question, and said:

"Isn't that right, Zack?"

"Find out!" was the surly reply.

"Oh, all right, if you don't want to answer," laughed the sheriff. Then to Sandy: "We'll just truss this fellow up, and then I'll summon a couple of officers by 'phone and have him taken to jail."

He produced a pair of handcuffs from his grip and snapped them on the wrists of "Keen Ralph," as he had termed the fellow. Then he pointed to the chair, and said curtly:

"Sit down."

The fellow obeyed without a word. He stared sullenly at the sheriff.

"Well, Mr. Ralph Keen, what have you to say for yourself?" Holt asked.

"I'm not Ralph Keen," sullenly.

"Oh, yes you are. I've seen you before, my man; and your photograph is in every rogues' gallery in the country."

"It's a lie! I'm not the man you think I am."

The sheriff shrugged his shoulders.

"Bosh!" he said. He turned and calmly dressed himself. He pretended to not be paying any attention to the prisoners, but he was watching them covertly, and he saw them exchange significant glances. It was only too evident that they knew each other.

The truth of the matter was, that this fellow, "Keen Ralph," was the same man that had leaned against the blacksmith shop, back at Milburn, shortly after the capture of Bagley; but he had then been dressed in rough clothing, with an old slouch hat that hid his face pretty thoroughly, and he had not been recognized by Holt. Indeed, the sheriff had been thinking so much about his capture of Bagley, that he had scarcely given the fellow a glance. Now, however, that he got a good look at him, Holt immediately recognized him.

"Now, Sandy," said the sheriff, when he had finished dressing; "you stay here and guard the prisoners, and I'll go down to the office and 'phone to the Central Station and have a couple of policemen come here and take Keen to jail."

"All right, sir," was the reply.

The officer left the room, and Sandy pushed the door to and placed his back against it.

The two prisoners glared at him fiercely.

"You are responsible for our being here!" hissed Bagley.

"So I am, partly at least," nodded Sandy, coolly.

"And you'll live to regret the hand you have had in the matter!" snarled Keen.

"I am not at all alarmed," said Sandy.

The two glared a few moments, and then Keen said, with a change of expression on his face, and in a wheedling voice:

"Say, young fellow, there's money in it, if you'll help us to get out of here and away before that blasted sheriff gets back!"

Sandy looked at the fellow, with scorn in his eyes:

"What do you think I am?" he queried. "Let you go? Well, I guess not! I only wish that I was able to capture all the burglars in the United States and turn them over to the authorities. You may be sure that I would do it!"

"What a dear, good boy he is!" sneered Bagley.

"Isn't he, though!" from Keen.

Sandy paid no attention to the sneers.

The two continued to utter threats, and the things they did not say they would do to him, as soon as they were again free men, were unsaid simply because they could not think of them.

But it did not worry Sandy. He doubted not that the two would go to the penitentiary for considerable terms, and, anyhow, he would not have felt any fear even had this not been the case.

Presently he heard steps approaching, and the sheriff, accompanied by two police-

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men, entered the room, he having opened the door to admit them.

"This is the fellow," said Holt, indicating the recent capture. "He is Ralph Keen, a notorious burglar and crook, and was captured by this young man, here, who will appear in the morning and claim the reward."

"All right, sir. We'll take good care of him." Then to the prisoner: "Come along, my man."

Keen, the burglar, accompanied the policemen from the room, and he gave Sandy a baleful look as he went, and hissed out:

"I'll remember you, you young scoundrel! Some day, I'll square up my account with with you!"

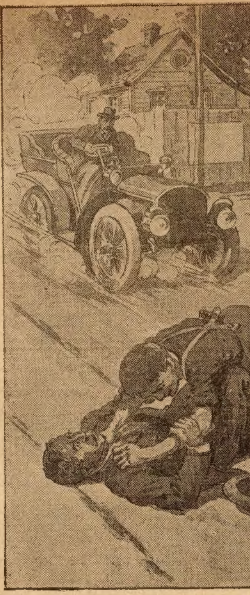
Sandy merely smiled, but made no reply.

"Lie down, Bagley, and go to sleep," said the sheriff, after he had closed the door behind the policemen and their prisoner.

The prisoner muttered something and then threw himself back on the pillow.

The sheriff and Sandy then turned out the light and went back to bed and slept soundly till morning.

The continuation of this thrilling story will be found in the Ledger issue of next week. It leads to a three thousand mile automobile race and other interesting things. Read it sure. If you are not a regular subscriber to the Ledger we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 per year; it is worth many times that amount. Send in your subscription, for many great stories that you cannot afford to miss will appear during the coming months.



"Now, stay there!"

A POLE ADVENTURE.

When the renowned and eccentric Captain Hayes invited my friend, Seth Taber, to join his expedition to the Arctic regions, in the summer of 1870, the latter assented with great eagerness. Not that Seth had anything to gain, more than his subsistence and small pay, but he had a young man's craving for novelty and excitement, and just then he fancied that he was very miserable, owing to a love affair which had resulted in the perfidy of a beautiful girl.

Let me tell his story in his own words, as related to me about two years ago, for Seth, although a traveled man, does not wield a pen himself.

"I went with the expedition," he said. "I shall not give you a history of my strange journey; I shall not tell you much about latitudes and longitudes, but I shall simply narrate a single incident of our experience, which occurred in Baffin's Bay, where we had been ice-locked for months; where the sun did not rise or set for many weeks, but circled about the horizon, sinking a little lower daily until only a rim of its disk was visible, and we had to climb the masts to get a vanishing view of even that. It was all very queer, and the wisest of us—not overwise—had to study our geography and astronomy to make it all out, though our captain gave us informal lectures on the subject.

" 'I'll be blamed if I can understand it,' said Bill Boson, an old tar who had listened with a puzzled air to one of these harangues and had examined a diagram on the cabin wall, obscuring it with tobacco smoke as he did so: 'Here's the 'arth and there's the sun, or at least the edge of it; now what the reason is that he can't rise and set as he used to do in York State, instead of fooling around there, is more than I can tell, or anybody else, I guess.'

"When the great luminary had disappeared entirely for a couple of weeks, this same sailor showed great uneasiness, and would listen to no more discourses on astronomy.

" 'You think that ere sun will come back again, do you?" he asked one day.

" 'Oh, yes.'

" 'I don't! It'll never come back! It don't stand to reason, and if I'd known how things was goin' to be I'd never have come on this fool's errand. It'll jes' grow darker and darker here until it's pitch night; then where'll we be?'

" 'We shall have the moon, and the stars, and the aurora borealis.'

" 'Oh, yes, part of the time; them ain't daylight, though. I don't like it. Jack Halyard says—he's got a 'stronomy book, too—we're living almost on the tiptop of the 'arth, and that's what's the matter. Maybe we'll slide down and off; who knows? I don't like it.'

"I am ashamed," continued Seth, "that I amused myself with Bill's fears, pretending to believe in them at times, and even exaggerating them to a considerable extent. But there was cause enough for alarm, aside from any doubts as to the physical course of nature in the due return of spring and summer, for the weather was intensely cold, the ice blockade seemed permanent, and there was no positive certainty that one season or even two would thaw us out.

"One day we were watching for seals—Ben Boson and I—about two miles from the ship. We had already shot one, and were hiding behind a hummock of ice for others to come up through the air holes, which they themselves had kept open, breaking through them from time to time to permit their emerging.

"It seemed cruel business, but we thought it sport, for it gave us a pleasurable sort of excitement, besides which we were credited on the ship's books with a small sum for each one that we brought in, and I gave my share to Ben.

"It was daylight, or nearly so, although there was no sun, for the twilight of the first few weeks is about the same as day. We had spent an hour or more in this employment, thickly wrapped in robes, and caps, and rubbers, and taking an occasional run on the ice to keep our blood in circulation. I had just missed my third shot at a seal, seeing the wounded or frightened game disappearing under the ice, when we became suddenly aware that we were not alone in our sport.

"There was another hunter in the field, who was by no means hunting seals; he was after us, knowing very well that we could not retreat under the ice as the seals had done, and thus escape him. Ben and I made the discovery almost at the same moment that a full-grown white polar bear was within thirty rods of us, making such rapid and direct approaches that there could be no doubt of his intentions.

"There was only one thing to be done; so we did not stop for consultations, but started and ran, of course, toward the ship, which we considered under all circumstances our ark of safety. But it was fully two miles distant—quite too far to be gained ahead of our fleet-footed enemy, and Bill was decidedly ahead of me in the race.

"Bruin knew his prey—he made for me. Unfortunately, I had just discharged my gun, and there was no time to reload it with my benumbed fingers. It had been hard work at best, even with abundant leisure to effect it. I could do nothing but throw the gun away, as it only incumbered me, and I gained some time in this way, as my unreasoning pursuer stopped a full minute to examine it.

"When he had tossed it aside and renewed the chase, I heard Ben calling to me, and saw him point, without stopping, toward some old, long-disused Eskimo ice-huts, which were considerably nearer to us than the ship, and which we had often seen and examined.

"We knew them to be empty, and that two of them were entirely frozen up, while in the third, the door—a block of ice—only partly filled the entrance, for we had once crept through the passage to explore the interior.

"I did not hesitate. My case seemed quite hopeless on the first alternative, and nearly so on the other; indeed, I think the bear himself so regarded it, for he did not seem to exert himself, but came on with a long, steady lope, doubtless, measuring the distance, and the steps necessary to overcome it, quite as accurately as if he had been a land surveyor.

"I now threw off my outermost overcoat, and at this also the enemy stopped and sniffed, while I increased my speed, now directing my course to the ice-huts. The panting beast paused only a few seconds this time; and I could plainly hear his breathing, as well as his steps, which were remarkably uniform in sound.

"He still gained rapidly. I believed my last hour to be at hand. I need not say that I was afraid; I was terrified—horrified beyond description, and I prayed as only dying men pray.

"Bruin was at my heels, certainly not thrice his own length distant, when I came to the first of the huts. The others, alas! were too distant to reach, and this was not the one we had squeezed into.

"I got behind it, interposing it between myself and the foe, who, of course, attempted to reach me by going around it. Here a new kind of race began, and as I kept nearer to the periphery of the circle than he could do, owing to the great length of his body, I think I gained a little advantage.

"After this had gone on long enough to become monotonous, he suddenly turned and went the other way, thinking probably, with a brute's unreason, that that must be the shorter route. Of course, I followed his example, and so the chase went on.

"At last he stopped and seemed to reflect, after which he made a quick leap toward the top of the low hut or hummock, scrambling up awkwardly through the deep snow, but gaining the broad apex, where he looked down upon me with very evident triumph.

"I was now clearly in his power, for he could descend at any point; but when at the next moment, he attempted to do so, he slipped and rolled to the very base of the hut, where he was for the moment so imbedded in the snow that he could not instantly extricate himself.

"I took advantage of this mishap to start and run toward the next hut, having gained a little breathing spell, and as I reached this hoped-for refuge ahead of my enemy, I ran around it to discover the entrance into which I had once crept, but which was now filled nearly to the top with drifted and frozen snow.

"I did not know whether I could get in. I did not know whether I ought to, for if I could enter, perhaps the gaunt bear could follow. But, being cold, numbed, and nearly exhausted, there seemed no other chance, and with the aid of both hands and feet I made an opening, and crawled through, hoping to fill up the aperture with the loose snow and hide it from the enemy.

"Vain hope! He was close at hand. He saw me enter, and his huge head was quickly at the opening and protruding through it, forcibly but slowly, as if it found some obstruction. I took out my knife, now my only weapon, and opened it with my teeth, for my fingers refused all service, but the red, wide-open jaws, now so very close to me, nearly seized my hand, and wrist, and knife together, while I stopped and hesitated, thinking where and how to strike.

The situation was terrific. I stepped back; the head advanced, followed by the shoulders and by one paw, while the other seemed to be doubled under him. I struck feebly with my knife, and a loud roar followed, but the beast did not advance or retreat. Then the idea flashed upon me that he was stuck fast in the small hole into which he had so eagerly crowded. Here was a gleam of hope, and I struck again. He only roared and dodged his head aside; then I was sure that he was fast, and I took courage and plied my knife more vigorously, keeping clear of his distended jaws, and aiming at his eyes.

"Whatever I could do I must do quickly. His warm body was already melting the snow and ice around him, and he was thus enlarging the orifice which as yet held him fast. A vigorous bound might bring him through.

"I again aimed at one of his eyes, but although my hands were now warming to their work, it was no easy matter to reach those terrible orbs. I tried his neck, and although my knife blade went in it was without seeming effect; but as he turned his great head on one side, revealing a cordlike artery, I gathered all my energy and made a thrust at it—a deep, slashing cut! The life-blood poured out and spouted over me, and I knew that my work was done, and drew back into the hut to rest.

"It was done. I devoutly uttered thanks while the brute poured forth his blood, roaring loudly at first, but with a bellowing which soon diminished in volume, until it sank to feeble groans. When I had rested from my great fatigue, I went to him—pityingly, I must say—but I cut another artery and hastened his end.

"How to get out of my prison was the next problem. I could not move the great carcass; I was fearfully cold, and I had to run and jump to regain my warmth and vitality. But I was sure that some of my friends were, by this time, in search of me. Nor was I mistaken, for the captain and nearly all his crew were out on the quest. I soon heard their shouts and made them hear mine, and our reunion was not long postponed. You may be sure it was a joyous one, and that the adventure was fully and minutely discussed around the great carcass, which was so evidently dead, when they at last came up, that they did not consider it necessary to reshoot or stab him before dragging him out of the hole into which he was so tightly wedged.

"Some of the men had brought dogs and sledges with them for a probable emergency,

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and on one of these sleds the prize was easily dragged to the ship, accompanied by the noisy cortege, who made the winter air ring with their shouts.

"Of course it belonged to me," continued Seth, "and I afterward had its skin prepared and stuffed, and sold it to the Navy Yard museum in Brooklyn, where it now stands, grinning horribly and sometimes frightening visitors who come suddenly near it. I cannot look at it myself without recalling the terror with which it once inspired me."

Lords of the Ax.

(Continued from page eleven.)

and hidden; and it has been there for weeks and I did not know it!"

The bronzed face of the foreman had grown gray. He was deeply agitated. He could not fail to see a drift in this matter which, though perhaps unreliable, pointed to a definite something; and the sweep of the idea thrilled him painfully. His hands trembled and the paper fluttered from his grasp. He did not heed it, but looked at vacancy with eyes that spoke more than his lips.

An idea stood naked before him—an idea so powerful that it seemed to touch mind, heart and soul and make all three a field of war and desolation—yet an idea so wild that he staggered under its mastery.

The brain that had appeared to be so clear and reliable in his recent business operations quivered and betrayed its one weak point. The verdict of Doctor Mason was proved true—something was lacking in Napoleon Knight's mental equipment. Now, that something asserted its right of tenancy and destroyed his equipoise. The natural mind had an idea, but the alien element stood in arms and baffled the olden powers. Logic was fettered. Grasping the inevitable deduction, it struggled in vain to keep it in the light.

Confusion had the foreman in its hold, yet, even then, memory clamored to assert its right and cast off its shackles.

Knight was near the truth, near the revelation; but his physical being staggered under the attack and he was miserably ill. He leaned his head upon his hands.

"If I could think clearly—but do I not think clearly? This paper—this memorandum—why have I it in my possession?"

The revelation came nearer. The light grew. His real self was at the threshold. Then a new idea seized upon him.

"The handwriting!" he exclaimed. "If it is——"

Stirring abruptly he picked up the paper. The handwriting was there, but it seemed unfamiliar. He hurried to his desk and, making use of pen and ink, proceeded to write the first words of the memorandum. This done, he compared the two.

"There is no similarity!" he muttered; and he was right.

Another period of meditation.

"I was mad to think it!" he decided.

He rose and stood erect. Mind and body resumed their wonted condition. He was calm, and with this composure came the power to think logically from his standpoint.

"There is a way to explain this affair!" he thought. "Granted that this was written by the new owner of Liberty—this Asa Sherwood—how happens it that I have possession of it? The explanation is simple, if it can be arrived at; the supernatural does not figure here. Now, how did I get it?"

He pondered briefly and then gained a theory.

"This coat!" he murmured. "It is the same that was given to me at Harker's settlement when I recovered from my gunshot wound. I was told that it was the one I had on when they found me on their doorstep, and as they were poor people, it is not likely that they had many garments to confuse with what was mine? No! I may have come into possession of another man's coat in some way, and the memorandum have been in the pocket when I acquired it. It's possible."

The foreman walked across the room.

"But," he added, "that does not help me much. The original owner of the coat must have been—I think—yes, it must have been he! Now, where have I been that I should get his coat, and, what's more to the point, who am I that I should be near—him?"

Another crossing of the room.

"Again, there are those documents of Asa Sherwood's that the Indian brought here—why, confound it! I am slow! After the Indian gave Sherwood's papers to me I slipped them into my pocket—the very pocket now of interest—and took them to Liberty. Bah! I have made a mountain out of a mole-hole; it is clear that this memorandum was with the other papers given to me by the Indian, and that, in carrying them, this one—this memorandum slipped away from the rest. Plain as A B C. No mystery at all. My imagination has run away with me!"

He tried to cast off his former impressions, but the case had features not easily accounted for then. The papers brought by the Indian were slightly discolored, as if they had been wet in some manner, but they were not worn in any degree. And the memorandum was so much worn that its edges were beginning to disintegrate. Again, the larger number of the papers had been wrapped in the red handkerchief. How could one of them have left the others——

Napoleon Knight broke off impatiently.

"This is nonsense!" he exclaimed. "I'll humor idle fancy no longer. I unwrapped that red handkerchief, myself, giving chance for this to get loose. I'll drop my useless mooning and go to sleep!"

It was the self-reliant foreman of Ben Nord who moved about and prepared for bed, but when he was there he did not wholly think about the business of Fergus MacBree. The memorandum would crowd cattle, sheep and horses, and persistently shoulder its way into Napoleon's mind. Even when he slept it was not soundly, and he frequently aroused, took up the subject anew, victim to broken rest.

It was during one of these wakeful periods that he heard an unusual sound at the window. Obscure, at first, it soon assumed clearness, so that he was confident a man was seeking to gain entrance. The movements were soft and slow, but they were systematic.

Knight's hand sought his pillow and grasped a revolver. He brought it out, leveled it, and then waited. Moonlight was at the window, but not on the bed.

A human head rose above the sill. Then the intruder hesitated and looked both ways. He distinguished nothing unusual. Napoleon Knight distinguished much.

The man at the window was James Anderson!

This dramatic story will be continued in next week's Ledger. Strange things happen. If you like the Ledger, and we feel sure you do, we would like to have you send in a subscription and take it regularly. A great many thrilling and unusual stories will appear in it during the coming year. You will find it a weekly treat, hence you had better send in your subscription now. Let us hear from you.

HER SON'S WIFE

Mrs. Hertel took three stitches in the centerpiece she was doing before she made comment on the lengthy remark of Mrs. Bartlett. Then she spoke.

"You always were terribly selfish, Amarilla," she said calmly.

Mrs. Bartlett's face, still pretty but with the petulant look of a self-centered woman, flushed.

"I don't see why you should say that, Julia," she protested. "Anyhow, it isn't selfishness that makes me say I don't want my son to get married and that I'll do everything in my power to keep him from it. No mere girl could understand Albert as I do or make him as comfortable—and, anyhow, I'd be too lonesome without him. I'm all alone and I've given the best years of my life to making him happy, and now he owes me something. That's my standpoint."

"And a pretty one it is," said Mrs. Hertel, with the frank indignation of an old friend. "What's Albert going to do when you are gone? He'd have a nice, cheery time as a lonesome old bachelor, wouldn't he? As for me, I hope he'll get married and married soon, and if you don't try to like your daughter-in-law, Amarilla Bartlett, you'll hear from me! I'm fond of Albert."

"Well I guess I'm his mother, and you're no fonder of him than I am," said Mrs. Bartlett, a little crossly. She and Julia Hertel had begun quarreling in their school days and years had not absolved them from the practice. "And I will not have Albert bringing some silly girl into my house to upset it, and I won't let him live away from me!"

Mrs. Hertel stood at the window watching her friend's departure down the street and shook her head. She had never had a son or daughter, and had secretly envied Amarilla Bartlett's possession of her tall, good-natured, pleasant-tempered son.

"He's too easy-going!" She spoke out loud. "He just humors her and makes her worse! He doesn't stand up for himself—and if he had half a chance he'd marry the little Alexander girl tomorrow! I've seen him looking at her over his mother's head, too, and all he needs is a little help. It would serve Amarilla right—I'll do it!"

With which enigmatical and disconnected remark Mrs. Hertel set her mouth firmly and laid plans. She found, however, that it was one thing to make them and another to carry them out.

Fate seemed to connive with Mrs. Bartlett in her desire to keep her son to herself. Albert was surprisingly dense from the viewpoint of Mrs. Hertel.

The time his mother was away on a two days' visit Julia Hertel had joyously invited Albert to tea one evening and as joyously invited the little Alexander girl. Propinquity, a complaisant chaperon, and the heavenly frame of mind, superinduced by the best preserves and biscuit and cake in town, was a combination that should have spelled success, and Mrs. Hertel positively chuckled in glee that day as she busied herself preparing for her company.

And in the face of this Albert had a telephone message and went to meet a customer, and the little Alexander girl, in all her bravery of new blue organdy and fluffy hair, had to eat the preserves and biscuits all by herself and act as though she was overjoyed by the sole society of her hostess.

Mrs. Hertel was so exasperated she could have boxed Albert's ears as though he were indeed the small boy she felt him to be.

"Even a deaf and dumb idiot," Mrs. Hertel told herself crossly, after the tea party was over, "would have had sense enough to turn down ten customers with such an opportunity at hand. It's the first time he ever had a chance to have Jessie Alexander to himself without his mother standing on guard. He's so under Amarilla's thumb he doesn't recognize freedom when it's staring him in the face. I won't give up!"

From then on Mrs. Hertel in her zeal made life miserable for her old friend, Amarilla Bartlett. At every social gathering she bent her energies upon throwing Albert Bartlett and Jessie Alexander together. It cannot be said that Jessie Alexander did not help in her efforts, for Jessie, with all her girlish ways, and big, appealing eyes, was older in years than most people realized and felt it was time to settle down.

Also Albert Bartlett was decidedly the most eligible bachelor in town.

In some terror Albert's mother viewed the proceedings and, finally, when by a clever flank movement Julia Hertel had succeeded in stopping her reaching Albert before he walked out to supper with Jessie Alexander she turned on her tormentor.

"What are you trying to do, Julia Hertel?" she asked, more acidly than seemed possible from one who posed as clinging and helpless. "Do you think you're going to marry that Alexander girl to Albert right under my eyes and I not know it?"

"I am if I can," laughed Mrs. Hertel, maliciously.

"Never!" cried Mrs. Bartlett, in a towering rage.

On the way home she addressed her son a little tremulously: "You don't like that Alexander girl particularly, do you, Albert?" she asked.

Her son smiled a trifle amusedly, for he saw many things that apparently escaped him. "Why, no, I can't say that I do," he said slowly.

But his mother was worried. Something was on Albert's mind which he was keeping from her, she was certain. He was abstracted at times, and once she had come upon him writing a letter, which he had hastily and with assumed carelessness covered with the blotter.

He was as kind and thoughtful as usual, yet Mrs. Bartlett's heart often throbbed with her old, wild, jealous fear. Perhaps he did care for Jessie Alexander and was keeping it from her; perhaps—oh, these were worried days for Amarilla Bartlett!

Always Mrs. Hertel smiled when she saw her, as though she was enjoying a secret, and always Albert laughed protestingly when his mother accused him fretfully of a fondness for the Alexander girl.

She was realizing, with something like dismay, that her son was a grown man, forever escaped from her thrall, and struggle as she might, his obedience to her was only through sufferance and kindliness.

"Promise me," she demanded one evening, "that you'll never leave me, Albert!"

Her son raised his head from his book and surveyed her with something like indignation in his fine eyes.

"I've never failed you, mother," he said, slowly, "and I never will!"

And his mother wept with anger at the ambiguity of his reply.

It was the day after Albert Bartlett had gone on one of his frequent business trips and Mrs. Hertel was spending the afternoon with his mother. Thus it chanced she was present when Amarilla Bartlett got the letter that forever rendered useless her determination to keep her son to herself.

"I know how you have always felt about marrying," Albert had written, "and realized argument would have no weight, so there was nothing to do but as I have done. I was married today to Elizabeth Jones of this city, whom I met a year ago on a business trip here, and I am bringing her home in a few weeks. She is a dear girl and already feels as tenderly toward you as I do, mother. Won't you be good to her, your daughter, when I bring her back? For, of course, our home will be your home, if you will consent."

Julia Hertel, though bewildered, clapped her hands. "I'm glad!" she cried; "I'm glad! I didn't think Albert was that independent! It serves you right, Amarilla Bartlett, and if you've good sense you'll take your medicine and be nice to Albert's wife and live happily ever after. I'm glad he's married. Though I must say I'm surprised! I thought——"

Amarilla Bartlett dried her tears a little triumphantly.

"Anyhow," she said, "he didn't marry that Alexander girl, and all your scheming went for nothing, Julia Hertel! I guess my son didn't need your help in picking out a wife! Why, he wouldn't have looked at Jessie Alexander for one minute with a girl like Elizabeth Jones ready to take him——"

"But you didn't know her and have never seen her!" protested Mrs. Hertel.

Mrs. Bartlett surveyed her friend in a superior way as she executed a mental about-face, possible only to a nature like hers, tenacious of its own.

"Well, she's Albert's wife, isn't she?" she demanded, defending her new daughter with a feeling which surprised even herself. "So I guess she's pretty nice."

"Amarilla," said Mrs. Hertel, with a deep breath of relief, "I guess you'll do, after all!"

Her Father and the Duke.

The duke had been silent for some time. Now he pushed his fingers through his rapidly thinning hair and turned and looked at the beautiful girl.

"I had anothah bloomin' talk with your fathah, don't you know," he querulously remarked.

"Yes, Fitzherbert. I heard your voices in the library."

"Your fathah," said the duke, doggedly, "is a deucedly practical old file."

"Yes, Fitzherbert."

"I told him, y' know, that before I could take you to the ducal palace a numbah of repairs would be requiahed. Blest if he didn't know all about it! Bah Jove! he had every little item down in his bloomin' notebook, y' know. Roof of th' ancestrawl art gallery leakin' badly, seven windows gone from the king's tower, wall of the left wing sinking fast, floor of the ghost's walk fallen through, refectory plastah dropping off, plumbing all to the bad, cornices rusted out, mews toppling ovah—he's got it all down in black and white, don't y' know."

The lovely girl faintly smiled.

"Papa has a great head for details," she said. "What else, Fitzherbert?"

"What d' you think?" cried the duke. "He's talked me into giving him the contract for all the repair work, do y' mind. Roofing, plastering, plumbing, tinning—every blessed thing, bah Jove! He says he might as well get the job as to let some bloomin' Englishman 'ave it—and, anyway, it ought to be kept in the family."

"What else, Fitzherbert?"

"He's going to take the arf million he promised me an' use it to square the repairs—and I'm to pay him the balance in easy installments! What do you think of that?"

"Father is awfully long-headed," said the lovely girl.

Beards and Pictures.

"Men who need a shave take a better picture than those who are freshly shaven," said a local photographer one day last week. "The short hairs soften the lines of the face and altogether give a less harsh and more even cast of expression, while all signs of unshavenness can be eliminated by a few strokes of the brush.

"The sensitive plate of the photographer does not miss a single wrinkle on a man's face. Some of these can be painted out, but if too much retouching is done the result is to take away all expression from the face. Two or three days' growth of beard just nicely conceals the worst of these wrinkles and reduces the retoucher's work to a minimum. By these means all harshness is eliminated, but at the same time the normal expression of the face is retained. Very few men realize this fact, and nine out of ten carefully shave before going down to the photographer, and as a result have poorer pictures for their trouble."

◆

The man who talks about himself and to himself never has occasion to swallow his words.

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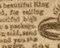

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171 E. Washington Street.

For Youthful Eyes

THE LITTLE OLD LADY OVER THE WAY.

By Ella Martin.

When we were children together we lived
  In a quiet village street;
And a little old lady lived over the way,
  With a garden of flowers sweet.
There were bachelor-buttons and four-o'clocks,
  And hollyhocks by the gate.
I liked these old-fashioned flowers the best,
  And so did sister Kate.

This lady was queen of the garden, we thought,
  For she was as gracious and sweet
As the scent of the blossoms wafted to us
  When we passed that side of the street.
She picked us a posy whenever we paused
  And loitered there by the gate;
And often she said, "Come in, my dears,"
  If the hour was not too late.

There were Ned and Will, and Katie and I.
  And all of us loved to play
In sight of the cottage where lived alone
  The dear old lady over the way.
The morning-glories climbed over the porch;
  The walk was so shady and cool,
It tempted us often to linger and chat
  When we were returning from school.

And Katie and I would imitate
  Her gracious smile in our play,
And try to say, "Why, bless you, dears!"
  Like the sweet old lady over the way.
Sometimes we talked in the gloaming and told
  What each of us meant to be
When we had grown to women and men;
  And Will was going to sea.
And Ned would be a lawyer, he said—
  He'd prove it to us some day.
But Katie and I both wanted to be
  A little old woman over the way.

HUNTER'S LUCK.

It was the year of the great hunger. A tall, gaunt Indian struggled up the steep slope of Lost Mountain. From cap to moccasins he was clad in heavy furs and the skins of wild animals, but at this high altitude even the furs availed little against the cutting blast.

When at rare intervals he paused for a breathing spell and to search the white landscape for signs of game he shook and trembled, for he was very weak from want of food. Far below in the valley between the mountains his squaw and children awaited his home-coming, and in the wigwam there was nothing to eat but a few strips of green buckskin.

After a while his tired limbs doubled beneath him and he sank down into the snow. He thought there was little use in prolonging this struggle, for the mountain sheep that at one time had been so plentiful in the region seemed to have disappeared with the rest of the animals. Better to stop now before his strength was entirely exhausted, he thought, and after a while perhaps he could return and fight it out to the end with the others down there in the wigwam.

As his gaze wandered over the mountain side suddenly his eyes lighted upon two black dots high above him. He rolled over upon his stomach and watched them eagerly, his chin propped upon his two fists. He knew at once they were the creatures he had been in search of, for no animal but a mountain sheep could scale the almost perpendicular side of the cliff as these animals were doing. To intercept their course and obtain a position from which he would have a chance to bring his bow and arrows into play it was necessary to cross a huge expanse of exposed, snow-covered mountain side.

Then all at once he threw himself flat, burrowing under the snow like a frightened rabbit. When he emerged he was coated from head to foot with the feathery crystals, and at a distance he appeared to be merely another of the numberless snow-capped boulders which protruded from the surface.

Immediately he began to worm himself along the slope, half crawling, half dragging his extended limbs, working gradually higher and higher.

After almost an hour of this labor the Indian found himself in a position some fifty yards below the narrow animal trail the two mountain sheep were pursuing. Above him reached the sheer face of the cliff; craggy, but yet insurmountable. It was still entirely too far for a successful shot with his bow, and unless some whim should cause the sheep to seek a lower level the chances were that his painstaking stalking would prove to have availed him nothing. As he gazed at his quarry his eyes discerned two animals still higher up the mountain.

Two tawny mountain lions were creeping stealthily, yet with considerable speed along a ridge that intercepted the trail at a point not far from where the Indian crouched.

As he discovered that these lions also were intent on making a meal off the carcass of a sheep, the Indian's heart gave a leap, for it was quite possible, in fleeing from the great cats, one of the animals might approach close enough for him to venture a shot.

So they waited, the two lions above the trail, the Indian below, while their quarry approached with no knowledge of the danger that lay ahead of them. As the sheep rounded an elbow of the cliff the mountain lions started from their concealment, covered the space intervening between themselves and their prey in half a dozen low, gliding leaps and were upon them.

Surprised as they were and with no chance whatever of escaping by flight along the path by which they had approached, the sheep halted, then, without turning, seemed to deliberately leap into space. Their keen eyes, however, had discovered several projecting rocks thirty feet below. Inadequate though they seemed, they yet afforded a sufficient foothold for the clinging hoofs of the fleeing animals. In this way, bounding from rock to rock with incredible speed, the two sheep safely made their way down the precipitous face of the cliff.

With a snarl of baffled rage one of the cats had halted on the very brink of the precipice. Her mate, more eager to make a kill or unable to stay his rapid charge, shot over the edge, and, whirling over and over, clawing at the wall of rock in a futile endeavor to halt his descent, fell at last at the very feet of the red man, where he was transfixed with two feathered shafts.

It did not take the Indian many seconds to loop his sash over the animal's head and set off down the mountain, dragging the carcass behind him. It was a long journey and a perilous one, but it wasn't many hours ere he reached his wigwam. You may be sure his squaw and children were made happy by his return, and they soon had the pot over the fire in preparation for a big pot-lach, which, in Indian language, means a feast.

THE TALE OF WILLIE JONES.

Naughty little Willie Jones,
  He saw some chickens dig
A hole beneath the deacon's fence
  Until it grew quite big.

Then little Willie thought and thought.
  "I'll likewise dig!" said he,
"Until the hole is large enough
  And deep enough for me.

"When once within I'll take some pears
  And hide them in my waist;
And then I'll crawl back to this side;
  How jolly good they'll taste!"

He did it all, that naughty boy!
  But retribution came.
The getting in and getting out
  He found were not the same.

Boy, plus the pears, quite filled the hole;
  He stuck beneath the rails.
The deacon, coming out just then,
  Gave heed unto his wails.

"Ha-ha! Ha-ha! Ha-ha!" he said,
  And chortled loud with glee.
"I've lost my pears, but I will seize
  My op-por-tu-ni-ty!"

He seized it! More I cannot tell,
  My fountain pen runs dry;
And sympathetic tears will flow
  From tender-hearted eye.

Poor Willie learned his lesson; 'twas
  Convincing and commanding,
And for the present he prefers
  To take his meals a-standing.

The Diving Bell.

How many of you children know who first invented the diving bell? It was not a man nor a woman, but a little spider, that built its home under the water long before man thought of the diving bell. The spider's house, made of the finest spun silk, is, strange to say, though under water, filled with air. To keep his house from ascending to the surface the spider fastens it with silken cords to the grass in the pond or brook, or whenever the house may be; if he did not, it would rise like a balloon, float from its moorings and leave the spider family homeless.

These spiders, called naiads by naturalists, show a large degree of intelligence, and are clever hydraulic engineers. They swim easily, and under water they look like round, moving pearls, a layer of air concealed under the skin giving them this strange appearance. They rise to the top of the water to inhale a bubble of air, swim with it to the bottom, and when building their bell houses, completely fill them with air by this process.

191
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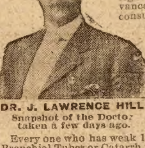
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Snapshot of the Doctor taken a few days ago.

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